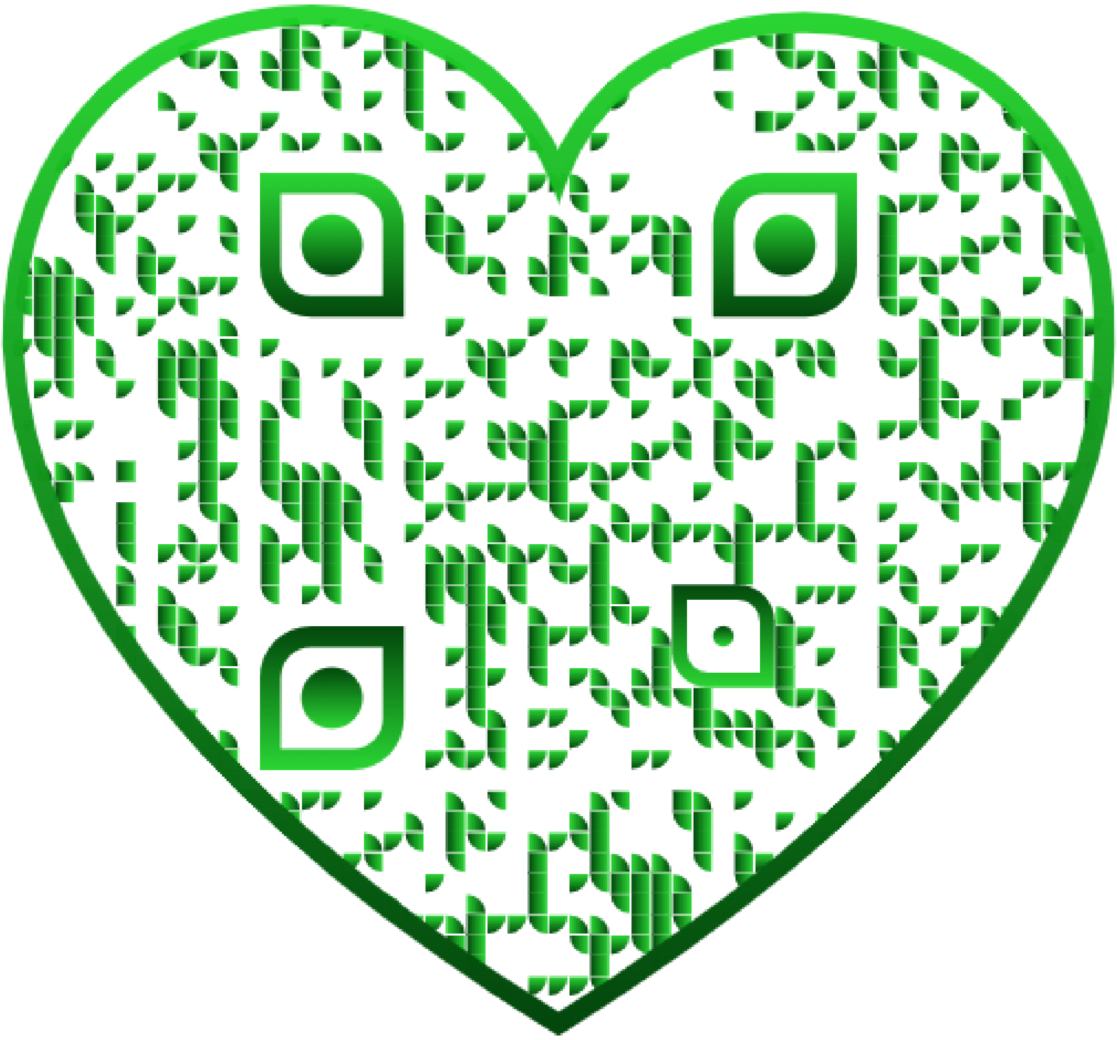
YOUTH! ARISE, AWAKE AND KNOW YOUR STRENGTH

By

SWAMI SRIKANTANANDA

Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence
Ramakrishna Math
Domalguda, Hyderabad - 500 029



Published by
Adhyaksha
Ramakrishna Math
Domalguda, Hyderabad - 29

© Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad
All rights reserved

Upto 18h Editions :	2,94,000 *copies*
19h edition (Nov 2011) :	10,000 *copies*

3345

Printed in India at
Charitha Impressions
Hyderabad.

CONTENTS

Page

Part – One 1-16
YOUTH! ARISE, AWAKE
i) Introduction
ii) Who is a Real Youth
iii) True Education
iv) Strength is Life
v) Strength of Character
vi) Development of Will-power

Part – Two 17-54
SELF-CONFIDENCE: KEY TO SUCCESS
i) Introduction
ii) Self-confidence vs Ego
iii) Self-confidence vs Over-confidence
iv) How to build Self-confidence
v) Swami Vivekananda on Self-confidence

Part – Three 55-72
HOW TO OVERCOME SUICIDAL TENDENCIES
i) Introduction
ii) Problems and solutions
iii) Some Suggestions

Part – Four 73-141

STRENGTH OF BRAHMACHARYA

i) Introduction
ii) How to practise Brahmacharya (Questions & Answers)
iii) Autobiography of lust
iv) What They Say
    a) Sri Ramakrishna
    b) Jesus Christ
    c) Bhagavan Buddha
    d) Swami Vivekananda
    e) Swami Yatishwaranada
    f) Mahatma Gandhi
v) How Sri Ramakrishna taught his disciples
vi) Sources of Inspiration
    a) Swami Vivekananda
    b) Mahatma Gandhi
    c) Lakshmana
    d) Mahavir Hanuman
vii) Glory of Brahmacharya

Part - Five 142-172

WHAT IS VEDANTA

i) Introduction
ii) Essence of Vedanta
iii) Philosophy of Vedanta
iv) Vedanta in Practice
v) Renunciation and Service

PART – ONE
YOUTH ! ARISE, AWAKE

Stand and die in your own strength; if there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death.

- Swami Vivekananda

YOUTH! ARISE, AWAKE AND KNOW YOUR STRENGTH

PART ONE

YOUTH! ARISE, AWAKE

i) Introduction

To cherish high ideals, to reach great heights in life, to come out with flying colours in all one's endeavours, to attain the desired goal, even after facing mighty obstacles, is the ambition of every youth. This ambition is really wonderful, marvellous, a sign of real youth, without that life is meaningless, useless and monotonous. Youth must always look forward – and should never be satisfied with anything less than what they want to achieve in life. Stagnant life is a sign of death. "Go forward, go forward, go forward - never look back even for a moment." These are the encouraging words of great ones. "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!" May these inspiring words of Swami Vivekananda ring in the minds of our youth day and night. Succeed you must. Nothing to despair, nothing to lower your spirit, you

have within you that power, that infinite strength to reach your goal, to achieve everything that you wish to achieve; you may not be aware of it. Try to know your strength, hidden strength, infinite strength. Awake to rise, rise to long, long to achieve, achieve to fulfil. Always remember the spirited words of Swami Vivekananda: "Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny."

ii) Who is a Real Youth?

Physical growth alone is not a sign of real youth. There are hundreds and thousands of such youth, but their faces do not reflect the qualities that every youth should possess. Will you call him a youth who is chicken-hearted, with a pale and long face, sickly in appearance, indisciplined senses, restless mind, dull intellect and an incarnation of laziness? Never, never! We want the youth of Swami Vivekananda's dream. He said, "Arise, awake, for your country needs this tremendous sacrifice. It is the young men that will do it. The young, the energetic, the strong, the well-built, the intellectual, for them is the task." Development of these

qualities will certainly transform our so-called youth into real youth, then alone will they be able to break all barriers that hamper their progress. Swami Vivekananda was confident about such transformation when he said, "My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation; out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem, like lions."

Swami Vivekananda wanted our youth to be like lions. He himself was a lion and came to this world to transform everyone into lions. The effect of his thunderbolt-like words was such that many youth who fought for the country's freedom were transformed into real lions; to mention a few names – Subhash Chandra Bose, Lokamanya Tilak, Aurobindo, Sister Nivedita, Mahatma Gandhi — who made India free. His only mission in life was to awaken the youth of this country to bring back the lost glory of our motherland. His life and message are a perennial source of inspiration to our modern youth. This is not a mere exaggeration but testimony of facts. His biographers did not fail to notice the youthful qualities of young Narendranath (later,

Vivekananda): "His mind filled with a hundred soaring visions, heart soaked in affection, intellect razor-sharp, courage boundless, inventive genius astounding, working capacity unreckoned, and enthusiasm irrepressible — Naren was peerless even from childhood. Above all was his spontaneous inclination towards God."

These shining qualities made Vivekananda a renowned figure. The world recognised him as a great, inspiring personality when he appeared as a delegate at the famous Parliament of Religions held in 1893 at Chicago. These qualities of young Narendranath convinced the Government of India to announce his birthday, i.e. 12th January, as the National Youth Day.

iii) True Education:

Are our modern youth of India anywhere near this ideal youth, Narendranath? It is for the youth to rebuild our nation. Alas, they are not able even to build their own character! How will they be able to build a new India? If they cannot solve their own problems, how are they going to solve the problems of the

nation? The minds of our modern youth are becoming storehouses of multiple complexes, such as sex complex, fear complex, ego complex, inferiority complex, etc. All such negative emotions are making their lives a playground for all types of vices. They are unable to get out of the clutches of these terrible demons. Unless they are determined to escape from these vices, there is no hope for them or for the country. To create such youth, who will bring glory to our motherland, we have to train them in the right direction. It is high time we exposed our youth to positive methods of learning. Swami Vivekananda has already suggested the type of education that our youth need today. He said, "We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet."

iv) Strength is Life:

"Strength is life, weakness is death."

—Swami Vivekananda

In this changing scenario modern youth are facing enormous problems. No one has

sympathy for them. Everyone wants them to be the best in every field. Pressure is mounting on them day by day. Parents pressurise them to get good ranks, teachers expect the best performance; employers demand skilled and experienced hands, not to speak of cut-throat competition to secure jobs; above all, lack of parental love and proper understanding are causing perversions in the minds of modern youth, resulting in depression, trauma, hatred, disobedience, fear complex, frustration and even psychological disorders and suicides. On the other hand, electronic media is doing a lot of harm by not only killing their time but also by contaminating their minds with vulgarity and obscenity.

To face these challenges it is obvious that our youth need to equip themselves with superhuman strength. Modern educational system and book learning alone is not going to help them in solving problems. They will have to discover that strength within themselves. Let us have faith in the words of Swami Vivekananda: "All power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak. Stand up and express the divinity within you."

Swami Vivekananda is the architect of modern India. To acquire first-hand knowledge of the Indian people, he went round the whole country as a wandering monk. He was shocked to see everywhere emaciated and physically weak youth. What was his advice to them? "First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are my bold words, but I have to say them, for I love you. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you."

What are we doing to make our youth strong? It is not just enough to provide them with food, shelter, clothing and education. What is more important is to prepare them for the battle of life through positive outlook and practical wisdom. From the morning till the evening students are confined either to classrooms or to houses. They don't have time to play or exercise. Attending coaching classes, preparing for competitive exams, entrance

exams, homework and spending time sitting before television and computers — that is their daily routine. Unfortunately, parents also don't encourage them to spend some time on playgrounds; for them it is a waste of time. This sedentary lifestyle is causing health hazards to many of our youth. India needs heroic sons and daughters and not just goody-goody bookworms. What made Sardar Patel a great leader and the iron man of India? His biographer writes, "At school, Vallabhbhai was more fond of games than of books. He had no great love of study and preferred to learn from men with whom he mixed freely. He observed them closely and saw the impact of foreign influences on the old traditions and culture of the country. The town people admired the British, who had become masters of the world. They aped their manners, their dress and their way of living. Vallabhbhai wondered what their source of strength was. It was said that they devoted much time to sports and games which developed endurance, team-spirit and discipline. Somebody had said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. Young Vallabh became fond of sport and devoted all his spare time to it."

Practical wisdom and physical and mental strength made young Vallabhbhai a wonderful leader, a Sardar in true sense, who was ever ready to face challenges and difficulties with courage and boldness. When we come across such great characters, we instantly remember the inspiring words of the great hero, Swami Vivekananda. He said, "What our country now needs are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it means going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face."

v) Strength of Character:

"Neither money pays, nor name, nor fame, nor learning; it is CHARACTER that can cleave through adamantine walls of difficulties".

—Swami Vivekananda

There is a popular saying, "If wealth is lost nothing is lost, if health is lost something is lost, but if character is lost everything is lost".

But today what we see in society is quite the contrary. Money is playing a very dominant role in the present society. People are prepared to do anything for money, they can go to any extent, they are least bothered about the means. They are busy amassing wealth even at the cost of others. Their hearts are dead. They are living corpses. They have no compassion, love or sympathy for other human beings. Adulteration, cheating, bribery, theft, scams, scandals, dowry harassment, robbery, exploitation are rampant everywhere. Surprisingly, it is perpetuated by the so- called educated people. In the modern educational system, only the intellect is being developed but there is no scope for the development of the heart. It is only making people more and more selfish and greedy. Swami Vivekananda observed this when he said, "Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous."

In the midst of chaos and confusion, here and there we come across a few great characters who have left their marks through their wonderful contribution. Among such we have a most celebrated personality, Sir Moksha

gundam Vishveswaraiah, a great engineer produced by India in the last century. He is a bright example to our youth. He lived for 102 years and was full of enthusiasm, zeal and energy, almost till the end of his life. His dedication, sincerity, hard work, skills, integration, honesty, spirit of service, patriotism, above all his undaunted courage and disciplined life made him a unique personality. He was awarded the highest civilian award, 'Bharat Ratna', for his great contribution to our motherland. His biographer writes, "His was an unblemished pure life. No blemish could be traced in his long career. When on duty he would use Government vehicle, otherwise his own car. He never used Government paper and stationery for personal and non-official correspondence. When in doubt, whether it was Government paper or not, he would examine in bright light to detect the embossed mark, 'Government Stationery.' When he was asked about the eradication of poverty, he said, 'poverty is not natural. It is unnatural. It is curable like any disease. Ignorance, dependence, inefficiency, laziness; want of the

spirit of enterprise are the real causes of poverty."

Gandhiji's slogan was 'Industrialise and perish', whereas Sir Vishveswaraiah's slogan was 'Industrialise or perish.' Both were right: one was emphasizing human values, the other material prosperity. Swami Vivekananda came to harmonise these two apparently contradictory views. He encouraged Sir Jamshedji Tata to establish heavy industries in India, and asked Mysore Maharaja to help Jamshedji by way of providing land and infrastructure for the same. Swamiji wanted India to be great in every field, but not at the cost of long-cherished values and culture. He was sure that unless we combine both there cannot be real progress. The education which provides us both these aspects was real education, according to him. He said, "What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also shraddha and faith in one's own self."

Unfortunately, after independence, we are mostly concentrating on only one aspect, that is, western science; the other one is completely neglected. In the name of secularism, we have

carefully avoided long-cherished values which our ancestors lived for and practised. Due to lack of character energy, we have converted human beings into machines. Every year we are manufacturing thousands of Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Managers, Administrators but not real human beings. Human values such as love, compassion, peace, happiness, truthfulness, honesty, sincerity, contentment, non-violence, patriotism, fearlessness, confidence, courage, self-restraint are replaced by hatred, cruelty, deceit, greed, dishonesty, lust, anger, fear, cowardice, selfishness, violence, self-indulgence, etc., which has created a vacuum in the hearts of people. We have never seen in the history of India such degradation of human values.

vi) Development of Will–power:

It is no use blaming others, when we cannot change them. Today, our youth must develop tremendous will-power to resist these evils. They must develop moral strength to fight against social evils. Keeping quiet is not a great virtue. We need positive force to spread good ideas. Swami Vivekananda wanted young people to shoulder this

responsibility: "A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up – the gospel of equality."

Dear youth, how long will you sleep? Get up, give up all that is degrading you and respond to the clarion call of Swami Vivekananda and your life will be blessed.

❁ ❁ ❁

"My hope of the future lies in the youths of character – intelligent, renouncing all for the service of others, and obedient – who can sacrifice their lives in working out my ideas and thereby do good to themselves and the country at large."

- Swami Vivekananda

PART TWO

SELF–CONFIDENCE KEY TO SUCCESS

What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want. And here is the test of truth - anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity truth is all knowledge.

- Swami Vivekananda

PART TWO

SELF–CONFIDENCE KEY TO SUCCESS

1) Introduction:

"He is an atheist who does not believe in himself. The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself".

—Swami Vivekananda

Blaming others for anything and everything has become a chronic disease with us. Why should we expect someone to come and help us? To depend on others is slavery. No good comes of blaming fate, karma or circumstances. Only a man of confidence can convert challenge into an opportunity. Confidence is not a gift of God. It has to be cultivated with self-effort and diligence. Success stories of great people reveal the truth that in spite of their tremendous confidence they were not always successful. But the only

difference between ordinary people and great ones is this: great people never consider defeats and failures as obstacles, on the contrary, they turn them into stepping stones to success, whereas ordinary people get discouraged and stop moving further. Great people are fully aware of the power within themselves, capable of overcoming huge obstacles and continuing their march till they reach their desired goal.

"The fool never begins a work for fear of failure; the mediocre gives up in the middle, frustrated by obstruction; but the man of confidence never gives up, in spite of failures, till the goal is reached," says Bhartruhari, the poet. (*Nitishatakam*: 27)

ii) Self-confidence vs Ego:

There is a very thin line dividing confidence and ego. Most of the time we get confused and fail to decide whether we are on the right track or our ego is dominating in the guise of confidence. When ego dominates, every success turns into failure. One has to be very careful about it. How to

distinguish between confidence and the ego? Here are some points to clarify this doubt.

a) A man of confidence says that he can do the work and others also can do it, whereas a man of ego says that he alone can do it and nobody else can.

b) A man of confidence always tries to encourage and help others in building their confidence, whereas a man of ego tries to curb and discourage others when they try to come up in life.

c) A man of confidence always attracts people. Even the weak feel confident and elevated in his presence and get inspiration in his company. Whereas an egoistic person creates repulsion in the minds of people who try to avoid him because of his boastful nature.

d) A man of confidence appreciates the success of others and shares his happiness with them. Whereas a man of ego discourages and humiliates others and feels jealous of the success of others.

e) There is joy in working with people of confidence because they are always cheerful

and can mix freely with everybody. In the presence of egoistic people even the men of confidence feel an inferiority complex. They feel nervous to work with them.

f) A man of confidence always commands love and respect, whereas a man of ego always demands and expects love and respect.

g) Confident people are always successful in every field of life because they can conquer the hearts of all by putting their faith and confidence in others and receive all help and cooperation from colleagues and friends. A man of ego always suffers setbacks and failures losing men and power because of his arrogant approach which adds only to his worries and tension.

h) In one word, a man of self - confidence puts his faith in the innermost *Divine* Self, the source of all power and energy, and also feels the presence of the *Divine* in everyone while dealing with them, whereas the egocentric person puts his faith only in his mental and intellectual abilities and skills, forgetting the *Divine* which operates through mind and intellect out of ignorance. He

applies the same standards while dealing with others. He is only aware of weaknesses and drawbacks and never realises that the perfect *Divine* is hidden behind these superficial appearances, which can be awakened by constant training and positive approach.

iii) Self-confidence vs. Over-confidence:

There are two types of people: realistic and idealistic. Both are needed for the betterment of society. Idealistic people need to develop a little practical wisdom to execute their ideas according to changing circumstances and should be a little liberal to accept slight modifications and adjustment in the practical field to work out their plans successfully. But if they stick to their ideology without realising practical difficulties, if they never try to listen to the people who are experts in execution because of their practical experience and working skills, and are unwilling to accept any advice from anybody, they can be called over-confident people. For example, he who has never got into a plane trying to occupy the seat of the pilot, or one who has never held a gun is ready to go to the battlefield, or a person

terribly afraid of water trying to cross ocean by swimming. What happened to the great warrior Abhimanyu, though a courageous, heroic and bold but a bit over-confident. He knew how to enter into the labyrinth (Padmavyuha) but did not know how to come out of it. He thought that somehow he would be able to manage. His over-confidence cost him his life. Duryodhana also committed the same mistake. He knew the strength of Pandavas, whom Sri Krishna himself was protecting. Overconfident Duryodhana underestimated the strength of his opponents and lost everything.

Again, there are people with tremendous capacities to perform wonders but who are not aware of their own strength. They always undermine their ability and try to avoid the task. All they need is a little motivation, reminder and inspiration. The moment you awaken that giant within them they will do wonders.

Mahavir Hanuman had all power and strength within him to cross the ocean but he was not aware of that. When Jambavan reminded him of his strength, his confidence

was awakened and he reached Ceylon jumping across the ocean in search of Mother Sita.

Mahatma Gandhi in his book *My Experiments with Truth* tells us how his teacher was an instrument for his learning Sanskrit when he had lost all confidence in himself. He writes: "Sanskrit, however, proved a harder task. In geometry there was nothing to memorise, whereas in Sanskrit, I thought, everything had to be learnt by heart. The boys used to talk among themselves that Persian was very easy. The easiness tempted me and one day I sat in the Persian class. The Sanskrit teacher was grieved. He called me to his side and said; 'I want to teach you students Sanskrit to the best of my ability. If you have any difficulty, why not come to me? As you proceed further, you will find in it things of absorbing interest. You should not lose heart; come and sit again in the Sanskrit class".

"Today I cannot but think with gratitude of Krishnashankar Pandya. If I had not acquired the little Sanskrit that I learnt then, I would have found it difficult to take any interest in our sacred books." How a little motivation and kind words of his teacher could

instil confidence in the heart of Mohandas!

In spite of hard work and sound preparation, why are some students not able to succeed in examinations? Lack of self-confidence. The moment they enter the examination hall, the demon of fear robs them of self-confidence and makes them commit mistakes. All these things happen due to fear of examination. What to do in such a situation? Make your mind calm and tranquil. Give positive suggestions to your mind such as—the question paper is very easy, I know all the answers very well, I am not going to make even a single mistake. I am sure that I will get a very good rank this time. Then pray to God for two minutes to help you in concentrating your mind on the answers. Read all the questions carefully, understand them properly and with full confidence start writing your answers, and you will succeed. Same method can be applied before commencing any task if you feel nervous and diffident. Even Swami Vivekananda, renowned as an orator, felt nervous before he addressed a gathering of about seven thousand distinguished, critical and highly intellectual audience during the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893. In

his own words, 'Of course, my heart was fluttering and my tongue nearly dried up; I was so nervous, and could not venture to speak in the morning. I bowed down to Devi Saraswati and stepped up, and made a short speech.'

He addressed the audience as "Sisters and Brothers of America." It was only a short speech but created such an impact in the minds of the people that the whole of parliament was caught up in a great wave of enthusiasm.

HOW TO BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE

"What makes you weep, my friend? In you is all power. Summon up your all-powerful nature, O mighty one, and this whole universe will lie at your feet. It is the Self alone that predominates and not matter".

—Swami Vivekananda

Though the potential strength is hidden within us, we are not able to utilise it. Right attitude, positive thinking, and firm faith alone can help us to manifest this hidden strength within.

How do great people achieve success in life? They cultivate certain qualities in order to awaken the hidden confidence within themselves. Why not we also give a try if we wish to be great and successful in life?

1) Conviction:

The very first step in climbing the ladder of self-confidence is firm conviction about one's own ability. People are afraid of accepting challenges and responsibilities because they doubt their capacity to perform well; they underestimate themselves and lose wonderful opportunities in life. Such doubting Thomases will never be able to say with confidence that they can do anything and everything. So, never doubt your inner strength. You may not be aware at present, but believe that infinite power is lodged within you and will come out with all its glory when you sincerely call upon it by way of positive attitude. Swami Vivekananda said, "Never mind failures, they are quite natural, they are the beauty of life, these failures. What would life be without them? I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow—never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold on to

the ideal a thousand times, and if you fail a thousand times make the attempt once more".

How true it is! Thomas Alva Edison, one of the greatest scientists, who made a series of inventions, had great conviction in his capacity. He had made over 1000 experiments before he succeeded in inventing the electric bulb. Though he was born in a poor American family and was dull in his studies, nothing could obstruct his path or prevent him from great achievements because of his firm faith in his inner strength.

"Great convictions are the mothers of great deeds".

- Swami Vivekananda

2) Hard Work:

Nothing great can come unless we work for it. Dreams can never become a reality without hard work.

"Fortune approaches him who is industrious. It is the weak-minded who says 'fate gives'. No acts are done by mere desires, they are done only by diligence. The deer does not enter the mouth of a sleeping lion. Men obtain the desired fruit by personal

effort, while those wanting in manliness speak of destiny only. Neither the lazy nor those who depend solely on destiny fulfil their objective. Therefore, one should persist in self-effort by all means." These are the words of scriptures.

"Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration," says Thomas Alva Edison.

There are many stories of success. Among them was a world renowned speaker, Demosthenes. How could he achieve that? He had a strong desire to become a powerful speaker. It was not an easy task for him. He had a stammer, added to that he was not able to speak long sentences at a stretch due to stage fear, a feeble voice and many such difficulties. But he could succeed only through hard work. As per the doctor's advice he placed beads of flint on his tongue and tried to utter words clearly and loudly. He would stand before the sea and deliver speeches in a loud voice. He spent almost 15 hours a day studying books of various interest and became a reservoir of knowledge. To perfect his manners and gestures, he would

stand before a life-size mirror and deliver his speeches, bolting the room from inside. Hard-work and sincere effort ultimately resulted in success, and he became a powerful and effective public speaker.

Let us have a high dream and work hard to manifest that hidden power within. By constant efforts success is bound to come.

"To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. 'I will drink the ocean', says the persevering soul, 'at my will mountains will crumble up.' Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard and you will reach the goal."

-Swami Vivekananda.

3) Will-Power:

We are experts in taking vows and breaking them within no time. It is easy to take vows but difficult to keep them up. We need the will of Bhisma, who took a vow of life-long celibacy and practised it diligently. Weak minds always search for excuses. The mind is fickle and restless by nature, always ready to compromise and

vacillate. Those who possess a strong will and are determined to achieve great things never listen to their minds. They are masters of their minds. They make their minds work for them to achieve higher things in life.

King Vishvamitra was arrogant and created problems for Sage Vashistha; but when he was humiliated by Vashistha, realising the strength of spiritual knowledge, he decided to become a Brahmarshi. He was caught in the web of lust when Menaka tempted him into indulgence. He had to overcome all the impediments, such as anger, hatred, jealousy, pride, envy, delusion for the attainment of that state. He could succeed because of his tremendous will-power. He was never disheartened by failure. His determination and will-power helped him to awaken confidence which in turn led him to success.

"You must not say that you are weak. How do you know what possibilities lie behind that degradation on the surface? You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness".

-Swami Vivekananda

4) Self-respect:

It is a well-known fact that men of hard work, knowledge, wisdom, and perfection are always honoured and respected everywhere, whereas the ignorant, inefficient, lazy and dull people always face humiliation and insult. There are people who, in spite of being humiliated, insulted, warned several times, issued memos, scolded for their blunders and even punished, never try to improve themselves. They are people with a thick skin. They suffer from all kinds of phisical and mental tortures but don't want to change their attitude due to lack of self-confidence. But sensitive people consider humiliation worse than death and always try to improve in order to protect their honour and self-respect. Love for dignity and honour helps them to manifest hidden confidence within themselves and they rise to the occasion, and prove their mettle by accepting challenges in life.

The great poet Kalidasa was an illiterate and a dullard. Some pundits who had been defeated in arguments by a highly intelligent princess Vidyottama, got her married to

Kalidasa in a deceitful manner out of jealousy. When the truth came out she felt greatly disturbed and admonished Kalidasa for his ignorance. His honour was at stake. He felt deeply hurt and humiliated. He took it as a challenge and decided to become a learned man. This feeling of self-respect ignited his confidence. He left home and returned only after he had become a man of profound learning.

5) Long Preparation:

It's not enough to manage things, but it is important to manage them well. Great things happen not out of magic or miracles but out of systematic preparation. Those who do not prepare well and try to manage things haphazardly always meet with embarrassment and utter failure. Most of the people keep on thinking about goals but do not pay attention to the minute details which will help them to achieve it. We all know that on 11^{th} September 1893 Vivekananda became a world famous figure when he addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. But we forget that success did not come even to the great Swamiji overnight. Preparation started

from the day he came into contact with his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, at the age of 17. Sri Ramakrishna knew that his disciple Narendranath was going to become a world teacher, and he moulded his life accordingly. Training of the Guru, first-hand knowledge of the people during his wandering days, deep study of scriptures and different branches of knowledge, his love and compassion for the entire mankind, spiritual discipline and realisation of the ultimate reality were the factors behind his success. Without proper preparation no person can be confident of success.

"Pay as much attention to means as to the end."

- Swami Vivekananda

6) Communication:

Many have achieved success only through the power of perfect communication. There are people who can be compared with a huge reservoir of knowledge and information, but not always effective and inspiring due to lack of the communicative ability. If you can speak even a few words with confidence that will

impress people and if you can impress people by your effective communication, it will boost your confidence. Many people talk, some are able to express, but only a few can convey their ideas in an effective manner. Conquering people through arguments may give you confidence but will never lead to success. Convincing people through loving, affectionate, polite and pleasant language not only gives you confidence but leads to success. You may not be highly qualified or scholars, still you find a place in the hearts of many. The power of your magic words will keep the listeners spell-bound.

Mahavir Hanuman was sent by Sugriva as a spy to enquire into the purpose of Sri Rama's entry into his territory. During the very first meeting Mahavir could conquer the heart of Sri Rama by his sweet, soothing, pleasant and polite language. Sri Rama was all praise for his skill of communication. Many lose confidence and feel nervous and depressed because of their poor expression.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister of Independent India, had a herculean task before him. At that time India was divided into 554 states ruled by different

kings and nawabs. 'Divide and rule' was the policy of the British Government. Patel was against it and wanted to unite India. To convince 554 kings and to make them surrender was not an easy task. He was confident of his ability to convince them about the great cause. He could successfully accomplish that because of his effective communication. Except one or two, all were convinced about his views and surrendered their states to make India a great united power.

"It is only a few that understand the language of the brain, but everyone understands the language that comes from the heart."

- Swami Vivekananda

7. Commitment:

Commitment and confidence always go together. The moment we forget our commitment to a particular cause, we lose faith in ourselves and try to justify our weaknesses. How many people remember that they are the citizens of free India and are committed to serve the cause of the nation? Very few indeed. You can count them on the

tips of your fingers. Mahatma Gandhi could have settled down in South Africa, but his commitment to his country forced him to return. Though the people did not believe him in the beginning, he was confident that he could win freedom for India through the power of non-violence.

Even when he was a student and wanted to go to London for higher studies, mother Putali Bai was not wholeheartedly willing to send him there fearing that Mohandas may not be able to resist temptation in a foreign land, and spoil his life. She wanted him to promise that he would never touch wine, meat and consequently associate with women during his stay there. Without a moment's hesitation, Mohandas agreed to her conditions. It was not an easy task for him. Many times temptations came, but his commitment to his mother saved him from all dangers and gave him tremendous confidence to overcome all difficulties in his path.

"Let the sages blame or let them praise; let the goddess of fortune come or let her go wherever she likes; let death come today, or let

it come in hundreds of years; he indeed is the steady man who does not move one inch from the way of truth."

- Bhartrihari

8) Discrimination:

Sometimes even the so-called learned scholars lose confidence when they fail to discriminate between the real and the unreal, the right and the wrong, vice and virtue due to lack of discrimination. Knowledge alone can make us free from all types of fears. Fear is the greatest enemy of man. People tell lies when they are afraid of punishment. A little sickness makes them depressed due to fear of death. They try to run away from the problems of life when are afraid of failure. Arjuna, a great warrior and hero of the Mahabharata war, went to the battlefield with the intention to fight. But at the crucial moment he was overpowered by grief and fear and lost confidence, sat down, throwing away his bow, depressed and despondent and refused to fight. Though he was a man of knowledge, got totally confused. Sri Krishna restored that knowledge again and made it clear to him that the soul is immortal

and eternal whereas the body is mortal and ephemeral. There is no birth or death for the soul. Therefore, there was no need for him to be despondent. Ignorance of his real nature was the cause of his depression. When Sri Krishna dispelled it in a trice by granting him self-knowledge, he got back his lost confidence and became victorious.

"The earth is enjoyed by heroes – this is the unfailing truth. Be a hero. Always say, 'I have no fear'. Tell this to everybody – 'Have no fear'. Fear is death, fear is sin, fear is hell, fear is unrighteous-ness, fear is wrong life. All the negative thoughts and ideas that are in this world have proceeded from this evil spirit of fear."

- Swami Vivekananda

9) Definite Goal:

Many youngsters are not very clear about their goal in life. You can't begin your journey unless you are clear about your destination. You cannot proceed even a step unless you decide where you want to go. A clear-cut goal and a

one-pointed concentration alone help us to manifest tremendous confidence.

We want to do many things simultaneously. Without singular devotion to the ideal, no great things can be achieved. Kalpana Chawla, born in a small town in Haryana, became the first Indian woman to travel in space only because she had fixed her goal when she was a mere child. Her biographer writes, "Kalpana would lie on her back and look at the glittering stars in the skies during summer nights. Presumably, this was what ignited her dream to journey into space." She set her goal and never deviated from it though her advisers, parents and even the college principal tried to dissuade her from her choice of aeronautical engineering and suggested to her that she go for more popular fields like mechanical or electrical engineering. But the young Kalpana refused to be convinced and finally achieved her goal overcoming all the obstacles in her way. Her one-pointed devotion to goal gave her the required confidence to succeed in life.

"Take up one idea, make that one idea your life; think of it, dream of it,

live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success."

- Swami Vivekananda

10) Love:

Love is that magic word which works like a tonic to manifest instant confidence even in a moment. Love makes impossible things possible. Abraham Lincoln, the greatest president of the United States, got that confidence and courage to fight for the abolition of slavery through love. It was his unselfish love for mankind which promoted him to act. His loving heart could not witness the sufferings of human beings who were treated worse than animals.

A young Irish woman, Miss Margaret Noble, inspired by the speeches of Swami Vivekananda in London, decided to come to India and help Swamiji in his mission of upliftment of Indian women. What was that force which made her renounce everything and follow Vivekananda to India? It was her love for India. Swami

Vivekananda could instil that love in her heart. This love in her heart for the masses and the women of India gave her great confidence to overcome all obstacles in her way. She served India by starting a school for girls in Kolkota and also took active part in India's freedom movement.

"Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Every step that has been really gained in the world has been gained by love".

- Swami Vivekananda

11) Concentration:

God has given a unique instrument called the 'mind' to all living beings including animals. But he bestowed his special grace only on human beings in the form of freedom. Animals are controlled by nature, human beings are capable of conquering nature. This conquest is possible only through the power of concentration. Swami Vivekananda said, "Herein is the difference between man and animals – man has the greater power of

concentration. The difference in their power of concentration also constitutes the difference between man and man. Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. This is the only difference".

Concentration leads to perfection, perfection to confidence, confidence to success and success finally leads to happiness. The concentrated mind is like a perfect instrument for achieving success in every walk of life. Creativity, talents, originality, scientific discoveries and inventions, fine arts and even spiritual truths discovered by the sages are the product of a concentrated mind. Especially for students and youth concentration is must. It is impossible to acquire knowledge and working skills without adequate concentration. Rest less mind leads to confusion, frustration, failures and various disasters.

How could Swami Vivekananda claim the pinnacle of success? Through the power of concentration. In his own words, "Just two or three days before the entrance examination, I found that I hardly knew anything of geometry, so I begin to study the subject,

keeping awake the whole night and in 24 hours I mastered the four books on geometry".

Because of this power of concentration Swami Vivekananda could master many subjects and become an encyclopedia of knowledge. Prof. Wright of Harvard University was so deeply impressed by his erudite scholarship that he insisted that Swamiji should represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago. On hearing from Swami, that he was denied that opportunity since he could not produce the required credentials, the Professor himself introduced Vivekananda to the organizing committee in glowing words, "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together. Asking him for credentials is asking the sun to state its right to shine!".

Concentration gave Narendranath knowledge, knowledge gave him confidence finally leading to success and made him the world conqueror, 'Swami Vivekananda'.

"concentration is the essence of all knowledge; nothing can be done without it. Ninety percent of thought force is

wasted by the ordinary human being, and therefore he is constantly committing blunders; the trained man or mind never makes a mistake".

- Swami Vivekananda

12) Strength:

Life is not always smooth like a bed of roses. Happiness and misery are two sides of the same coin. One needs to develop mental strength to digest them. Many a time a weak mind that is unable to withstand suffering invites only untold miseries. What happened to Dronacharya, when he heard the news of his son Ashvatthama's death? He lost confidence on account of grief and finally lost his life. Anger, grief, hatred, jealousy, ego, fear, inferiority complex are the obstacles which make a person weak and bereft of confidence. But there are people who maintain equanimity even in the midst of crisis. When Sardar Patel was arguing his case in court he received a telegram carrying the news of his wife's death. He was not perturbed by this and continued to argue till the end of the day, won the case in favour of his client and then broke

the news of his wife's death. That is the sign of a healthy mind. Such people never lose their self-confidence even in the midst of a crisis.

Nowadays, it has become a fashion to commit suicide. By committing suicide people think that they can solve their problems. Those who commit suicide or try to commit suicide are cowards, weak-minded. They don't have confidence to face challenges and try to escape by choosing suicide. Is anyone free from problems in this world? Without struggle, there is no meaning for life. We have come to this world only to conquer difficulties. Today, our youth are becoming so sensitive that for petty things they feel depressed and commit suicide. Success and failure are inevitable in life. Such a rare human birth is not meant for committing suicide. We have no right to destroy this body. It is a precious gift of God given to us to make the best use of it to achieve great things. Failures in examinations, a little scolding from parents, a petty quarrel with friends, a temporary financial problem, failure in love affairs, inferiority complex, unemployment, dowry harassment, these are the common reasons which force people to commit suicide. It is a

great sin to commit suicide. It is not less terrible than committing murder. We are not the owner of this body, we are only the keeper. Therefore, we have no right to destroy it. For every problem there is a solution: we need only a little patience and confidence. Let us develop mental strength and courage to face the problems of life and they will disappear in no time.

❁ ❁ ❁

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. Know that there is no darkness around us. Take the hands away and there is the light which was from the beginning. Darkness never existed, weakness never existed. We who are fools cry that we are weak; we who are fools cry that we are impure. Thus Vedanta not only insists that the ideal is practical, but that it has been so all the time; and this ideal, this Reality, is our own nature. Everything else that you see is false, untrue. As soon as you say, "I am a little mortal being," you are saying something which is not true,

you are giving the lie to yourselves, you are hypnotising yourselves into something vile and weak and wretched.

- Swami Vivekananda

SHRADDHA OR SELF-CONFIDENCE (in the words of Swami Vivekananda)

Those of you who have studied that most beautiful of all the Upanishads, the *Katha*, will remember how the king was going to make a great sacrifice and instead of giving away things that were of any worth, he was giving away cows and horses that were not of any use, and the book says that at that time Shraddha entered into the heart of his son, Nachiketa. I would not translate this word Shraddha to you, it would be a mistake; it is a wonderful word to understand, and much depends on it; we will see how it works, for immediately we find Nachiketa telling himself, "I am superior to many, I am inferior to a few, but nowhere am I the last, I can also do something." And this

boldness increased, and the boy wanted to solve the problem which was in his mind, the problem of death. The solution could only be got by going to the house of Death, and the boy went. There he was, brave Nachiketa, waiting at the house of Death for three days, and you know how he obtained what he desired. What we want is this Shraddha. Unfortunately, it has nearly vanished from India, and this is why we are in our present state. What makes the difference between one man and another is the difference in this Shraddha and nothing else. What makes one man great and another weak and low is this Shraddha. My Master used to say, "He who thinks himself weak will become weak" and that is true. This Shraddha must enter into you. Whatever material power you see manifested by the Western races is the outcome of this Shraddha, because they believe in their muscles and if you believe in your spirit, how much more will it work! Believe in that infinite soul, the infinite power, which, with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That Atman which nothing can destroy, in It is infinite power only waiting to be called out. For here is the great difference between all other

philosophies and the Indian philosophy. Whether dualistic, qualified monistic, or monistic, they all firmly believe that everything is in the soul itself; it has only to come out and manifest itself. Therefore, this Shraddha is what I want, and what all of us here want, this faith in ourselves. Before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that loss of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have this Shraddha, and everything else is bound to follow.

The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they became great. Let a man go down as low as possible; there must come a time when out of sheer desperation he will take an upward curve and will learn to have faith in himself. But it is better for us that we should know it from the very first. Why should

we have all these bitter experiences in order to gain faith in ourselves? We can see that all the difference between man and man is owing to the existence or non-existence of faith in himself. Faith in ourselves will do everything. I have experienced it in my own life, and am still doing so; and as I grow older that faith is becoming stronger and stronger. He is an atheist who does not believe in himself. The old religion says that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith, because the Vedanta, again, is the doctrine of oneness. It means faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourselves means love for all, love for animals, love for everything, for you are all one. It is the great faith which will make the world better. I am sure of that. He is the highest man who can say with truth, " I know all about myself." Do you know how much energy, how many powers, how many forces are still lurking behind that frame of yours? What scientist has known all that is in man? Millions of years have passed since man first came here, and yet but one infinitesimal part of his powers has been manifested. Therefore, you must not say that

you are weak. How do you know what possibilities lie behind that degradation on the surface? You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness.

Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God — this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now and again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong; that is what we need. Why is it that we three hundred and thirty millions of people have been ruled for the last one thousand years by any and every handful of foreigners who chose to walk over our prostrate bodies? Because they had faith in themselves and we had not.

An English boy will tell you, "I am an Englishman, and I can do anything." An American boy will tell you the same thing, and so will any European boy. Can our boys say the same thing here? No, nor even the boys' fathers.

We have lost faith in ourselves. Therefore to preach the Advaita aspect of the Vedanta is necessary to rouse up the hearts of men, to show them the glory of their souls.

Have faith in man, whether he appears to you to be a very learned one or the most ignorant one. Have faith in man, whether he appears to be an angel or the very devil himself. Have faith in man first, and then having faith in man, believe that if there are defects in him, if he makes mistakes, if he embraces the crudest and the vilest doctrines, believe that it is not from his real nature that they come, but from the want of higher ideals. You give him the truth, and there your work is done. Let him compare it in his own mind with what he has already in him; and, mark my words, if you have really given him the truth, the false must vanish, light must dispel darkness, and truth will bring the good out. Put the good before them, see how eagerly they take it, see how the divine that never dies, that is always living in the human, comes up awakened and stretches out its hand for all that is good, and all that is glorious.

❁ ❁ ❁

PART THREE

HOW TO OVERCOME SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

Suicide is a heinous sin, undoubtedly. A man who kills himself must return again and again to this world and suffer its agony.

—Sri Ramakrishna

PART THREE

HOW TO OVERCOME SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

It is a sad thing that nowadays the suicidal tendency is on the increase among the youngsters. Almost every day we read in the newspapers such cases of suicides. How foolish it is even to think of suicide! Such a precious gift of God—this human body—to be destroyed for petty matters! It is the cowardly and the weak-minded who are afraid to face challenges and difficulties in life take recourse to such foolish acts. A hero who is ready to face challenges with courage and boldness never thinks of committing suicide but always tries to find remedies to solve them.

Life is not so cheap that we can play with it. The body has come into existence not out of an accident but out of the law of Karma. If our sufferings are the result of our past actions, we have full freedom to change them by performing good actions. Most of the people feel frustrated when their desires are not satisfied and try to commit suicide. But they forget the eternal law that we get only what we deserve and not what

we desire. Why not increase our power of deserving things by sincere and honest hard work?

Once, in a state of depression, Sri Anna Hazare wanted to commit suicide. Just before he attempted it, Swami Vivekananda's small booklet came to his hand. He read it thoroughly again and again. The impact was such that his entire thinking underwent drastic change. He realised the worth of human life after reading some teachings of Swami Vivekananda: "Blessed are those whose bodies get destroyed in the service of others." "They alone live who live for others; the rest are more dead than alive." After reading such inspiring messages he changed his plan and decided not to destroy body but to offer it for the service of fellow human beings. He went back to his village and started working for the people there. People look upon him as a saviour, respect him, and bow down to him because of his great contribution in moulding their lives. The body which he wanted to destroy and offer to crows and vultures by committing suicide is being honoured by thousands.

Those who have faith in God and believe

that it is His will that wants us to suffer in order to learn lessons from suffering, only to rise above them in due course , surrender themselves to that Supreme Divine being and never think of committing suicide. God is like a big sponge or shock absorber. Pass on your sufferings to Him, pray to Him for help and ask for strength to bear them with a tranquil mind, sufferings will pass away like clouds. How much the boy Prahlada suffered! His own father Hiranyakashipu tortured him, harassed him but his faith in God was such that the Lord had to protect him.

The ultimate goal of human life is to realise God or Self or Atman eternally present in the depth of the human body. If you are depressed because you could not achieve worldly success, take it in a positive way and think that your life is not meant for petty things of this world but God wants you to strive for higher spiritual things which can give you infinite peace and happiness, and thus you can overcome all your miseries like birth, death, desease, old age, etc., once for all. Sufferings are related only to body and the mind but the soul within is free from all such bondages. Let your sufferings turn into

boons to direct your mind from the world to God. When Bilvamangal was scolded by his wife for his extreme attachment to her, he learnt a lesson and directed his mind towards God and became a great saint. Blessed are those who learn lessons from sufferings, instead of running away from the problems by committing suicide. Try to find permanent solutions for them by striving for spiritual enlightenment.

It is a general belief that the person who cuts short his life by committing suicide becomes a ghost. Since he has taken the law of nature in his own hands, he will not get another body till the allotted life-span is over. Till then has to remain in a subtle body; this state is supposed to be a state of terrible suffering. Even after getting another body, he will have to suffer for his previous karma more intensely because of his terrible sin of killing his own body. Therefore, it is foolish to destroy one's body by committing suicide. Heroic souls work out their karma by their self-effort and, instead of destroying their bodies, they destroy the root cause of suffering, that is, bad impressions and tendencies through the practise of devotion, scriptural study, meditation and good actions.

Here are a few situations which may tempt you to commit suicide. How to handle them boldly?

PROBLEM-1:I am very much depressed and not at all interested in living any more. All my dreams are shattered. I wanted to marry a person to whom I have given my whole heart, but it is my fate that it is not going to happen.

SOLUTION : Birth, death and marriage these are the things decided by providence and we have no hand in them. God has already decided to whom you are going to get married. He is all-knowing and knows who is a suitable partner in your life. In spite of all your efforts if you fail in your love affairs, take it in a positive way that God is not willing to accept this proposal. Out of your temporary attachment you may feel depressed but in the long run you will realise that it was for your own good that you did not marry that person. Our vision is limited and cannot see even a few steps ahead. But the Lord knows everything. If you had got married to the person of your choice, there might have arisen some serious complications

after marriage which would have caused more sufferings to you. Love marriages are therefore not always successful.

Secondly, how selfish you are! You are only thinking of your enjoyment, your success, your desires, your marriage. What about your parents? You want to commit suicide without giving a single thought to them who have given you birth and brought you up with all love and affection. Is it not your duty to serve them and look after them in their old age? If you commit suicide how much suffering you will be causing to them! They may not be able to bear your separation and their grief- stricken heart may collapse any day. Have you thought about it?

Problem-2 : I have committed a heinous sin. I am feeling guilty for what I have done. I cannot even tell such things to my parents. I am very much depressed. It is better to die than to live such a wretched life.

SOLUTION: By committing suicide how are you going to solve your problem? People will certainly come to know about your reason for committing suicide, which will bring shame to you and your family. Even if you think that

you can escape, you cannot. You can escape from others but the result of your actions will not spare you. Added to that, you are committing one more sin by killing your body, which amounts to committing murder. You have not created this body, then how can you destroy it?

Always remember that there is power within you to convert sins into merits. Vivekananda says that it is a sin to call a person a sinner. You have not committed a sin but made mistakes out of ignorance, and that is natural for any human being. Remember that every saint has a past and every sinner has a future. There is no eternal sin as such. We can undo what we have done. Now you know what is good and what is bad. Make a resolution that you will never repeat those mistakes again, change your thoughts and actions and you will see that a bright future is ahead for you. By changing your attitude you will be able to transform your whole personality like the robber Ratnakara who transformed himself into the sage Valmiki.

PROBLEM-3: I am feeling depressed and feel like committing suicide because of my inferiority complex. All my friends

are well-settled in life but I am not able to get even an ordinary job. My parents have high expectations from me and they go on reminding me about my future.

SOLUTION: Don't you know that there are millions of people struggling for a morsel of food and spending their entire life under the open? Are you not much better than them? Be grateful to God that he has given you good parents who are taking care of your necessities. They have given you education so that you can stand on your own feet. Why do you compare yourself with others? Always think that you are different from others, and born to achieve great things. Do not compare, compete, or imitate them. You are a unique personality and therefore have faith in your potential. Why do you always think of getting a job? Why do you want to become a slave? Have confidence and create jobs for others. No work is too small or too great; it is the person who performs that job that makes it great. Work hard, manifest perfection, think deeply and take up something, may be your own household business, or agriculture, or anything. If you are sincere and honest you will certainly succeed. Don't you know our Pulla Reddy Garu

started his sweetmeat business with only one thousand rupees? But how could he succeed? Honesty, sincerity, dedication, hard work, truthfulness: these are the things which will lead you to success. Don't feel shy to do manual work. In other countries students are prepared to work anywhere. They don't mind working in hotels or petrol pumps or even as a household labour. We always expect white-collared jobs. Here we make so much fuss about dignity of labour: I am a big man how can I do such a small job? Give up such type of mentality. Be prepared to do anything, but do it with complete dedication and sincerity and you will certainly succeed. Don't be dependent on your parents. How long can they look after you? Earn and learn. There are many opportunities if you are willing to accept them. God, who has created you, will certainly help you in your efforts. God helps those who help themselves. Don't lose heart. Have patience and continue your struggle. You will succeed. It is a silly thing to commit suicide just for the sake of job or money. Have you ever heard that money makes a man? It is man who makes money. But don't be lazy. Don't wait for opportunities, but create opportunities. Have

confidence and courage; take risk and face challenges, and you are bound to succeed. Never, never entertain the idea of suicide. Have faith that you are going to achieve great things.

PROBLEM. 4: I have got very few marks in my exams. I am afraid to face my parents. They will scold me. How can I show my face to them? I am depressed and feel like ending my life.

SOLUTION : You have prepared well for your examinations. Your parents know very well that you are intelligent, sincere and honest. Even if you are not intelligent, you have tried to the best of your ability. How can you think that they will scold you? There may be other reasons to get less marks. And even if your parents scold you, what does it matter? It is their duty to give you good education so that they will be free from worry about your future. They want to see you well-settled in life. They love you and therefore they have the right to scold you. Don't be so sensitive. Bear it. Try to convince them that you have tried to the best of your ability, and also assure them that next time you will try to do better. Do not be afraid, but be bold to open out your mind to your parents. If you find

it extremely difficult for you to cope with subjects in school or college request them to allow you to go for a change. All cannot get first rank and achieve merit. Out of thousands there will be a few who are toppers. What about the remaining ? Do you mean that others are worthless and useless? Who knows they may shine in some field or other. Search your own talents. Find out your own interests and try to master them. You may not be good in studies; but who knows you may become a good artist, singer, poet, champion, cricketer, politician, or a businessman. It is not necessary that all should become doctors, engineers or software professionals. There are many options. Convince your parents about your goal in life. They will certainly listen to your request. If it is within their reach they will surely try to help you. Many great scientists and philosophers were dropouts from school; but they became great. Don't entertain negative thoughts. Never think of committing suicide even in your dreams. These exams are nothing. You will have to face many more exams in real life. If you are mentally weak, how will you face problems in real life? Do your duty perfectly and be content with

whatever you achieve. Next time take up a challenge to perform better, work a little harder, be confident and prove through your actions that you are no less than others. That is the way to come up in life, not by ending life. God has not given this life to waste it in that way.

HOW TO OVERCOME SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

Some suggestions :

It is unbearable suffering—physical and mental—that leads to suicidal tendency. Is anyone free from such suffering? No! Then is it not wise to develop strength of mind to bear with it? Sri Krishna says in the Gita, 'When senses come in contact with sense objects one experiences heat and cold, pleasure and pain. They are subject to coming and going and are transient; therefore endure them.' If someone says, 'You are a fool, rascal, idiot and worthless fellow, get out from here.' What happens? A few harsh words they are indeed. When they fall on the ear-drums comes the immediate reaction, making a person violent. We keep our peace of mind in someone else's pocket. Behave like a deaf man, think that you have

not accepted even a single word of what he had said. There will be no reaction and depression. Within no time everything will become normal. If you keep quiet, the other man will feel guilty of his crude behaviour and will come to you asking for pardon.

Sufferings are inevitable. But the only hope is that they are not permanent, and therefore let us bear them with fortitude. How much Mother Sita suffered! All great people, including incarnations and prophets, had to suffer, but they could bear them without making a hue and cry. Their minds remain unperturbed in spite of severe sufferings.

Shankaracharya, in his book, ***Vivekachudamani***, had beautifully explained the word, 'Titiksha' – to endure all kinds of afflictions without any reaction, complaint or lament—this is called forbearance.

The solution to a problem is not running away from the problem but facing it with courage, and that is forbearance.

Here are some hints to overcome suicidal tendencies.

1. Don't suppress your feelings and emotions. Open your heart to a person with whom you

are free.

2. Don't sit and brood over the problem sitting in a corner of the house, but keep yourself engaged in some useful work. Try to avoid solitude as far as possible.

3. If you don't find anyone to whom you can unburden your heart, pray to God, open your heart to Him.

4. Be positive—sufferings are boons in disguise. It is one of the ways to workout the effect of past actions. Learn a lesson from sufferings. Have firm conviction that God alone is real and everything else is unreal. Direct your mind towards God. Pray only for the strength to bear sufferings and not to escape from them.

5. Listening to devotional music, reading of inspiring and strengthening literature, hearing speeches of the great personalities will keep you away from negative thoughts.

6. Once in a while visit holy places. Holy places are like power houses of spirituality which will help you to charge the battery of your mind.

7. Always seek the company of holy people and their advice if you are in a depressed state of mind.

8. Be practical, careful and watchful while dealing with others. Don't be foolish and get cheated by selfish people. Many times thoughtless actions cause all kinds of sufferings.

9. God is the creator of the entire universe. We all belong to Him. Have firm faith in and devotion for Him. He is ever-ready to protect us, since He has created us. He hears even the footfall of an ant. He does not desert them who call upon Him sincerely. So, call upon Him not only sincerely, but steadfastly as well, in happiness and in misery.

10. Always think that you are not the body, but you are *in* the body. It is the nature of the body to suffer, decay and die, but the soul within is free from all these changes, eternally blissful. Fix your mind on the self within the body. By constant practice try to overcome body-consciousness and abide in the Atman, the abode of infinite happiness.

❁ ❁ ❁

"No matter how many sorrows, afflictions, dangers, and obstacles one may be faced with, one's mind does not undergo any change. It is like the

blacksmith's anvil, which receives constant blow from the hammer and still remains unshaken. He who is a devotee of God must have an understanding that cannot be shaken under and condition."

- Sri Ramakrishna

"No one can suffer for all time. No one will spend all his days on this earth in suffering. Every action brings its own result, and one gets one's opportunities accordingly."

–Sri Sarada Devi

"It is the level-headed man, the calm man, of good judgement and cool nerves, of great sympathy and love, who does good work and so does good to himself."

–Swami Vivekananda

PART FOUR

STRENGTH OF BRAHMACHARYA

Our goal of life is moksha; how can that be ever attained without Brahmacharya or absolute continence? Hence it is imposed upon our boys and youth as an indispensable condition during their studentship.

- Swami Vivekananda

PART FOUR

STRENGTH OF BRAHMACHARYA

Introduction:

The impact of the western culture on the minds of today's youth is crossing all danger signals. Their rudderless ships are floating on the surface of this materialistic world without any direction whatsoever. The youth who are the future of India are aimlessly wandering without any destination. The greatest fear is, what will happen to these fresh flowers if they are not well protected in time from the harmful effects of sensual pleasure. The wild fire of lust and greed is engulfing the entire youth community. They are becoming the victims of the so-called modern culture. They are falling prey to all sorts of bad habits and becoming weak, physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. Due to lack of proper guidance from parents, elders and teachers, they are dissipating their youth energy only to invite physical and mental diseases. Forgetting their prime duty—to study and to acquire knowledge and skills through self-discipline and

concentration—students are spending most of their precious time in entertainment and enjoyment. They are least bothered about the long-cherished moral, ethical and spiritual values taught and practised by their ancestors and are blindly imitating the western culture. The result is all-round moral and spiritual degradation. Swami Vivekananda could sense this danger long ago when he said, "But mark you, if you give up that spirituality, leaving it aside to go after the materializing civilisation of the West, the result will be that in three generations you will be an extinct race; because the backbone of the nation will be broken, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built will be undermined, and the result will be annihilation all round."

No great things can be achieved without conservation of physical, mental and spiritual energy. The right time to achieve that is youth. The first 25 to 30 years of life is meant for learning. In ancient education system students were known as Brahmacharins. A student without Brahmacharya is like a fruit without juice, a flower without smell, a temple without deity and a body without life. Brahmacharya and student life

always go together. Running after money, sensual pleasures and spending considerable time for comforts and entertainment is a sure sign of fall from the ideal. Such students because of their scattered, restless and fickle minds will not be able to develop one-pointed concentration. And without concentration of mind great achievements are not possible. "To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts," says Swami Vivekananda.

The root cause for most of the problems our youth are facing today is sex and fear complex. Many have vague ideas about the practice of Brahmacharya. Here we are trying to answer some of the questions often asked by students regarding the practice of Brahmacharya.

Q-1. What is Brahmacharya?

Ans. The direct meaning of Brahmacharya is to restrain oneself from sexual enjoyment by thought, word and deed. Brahmacharya includes not only the control of sexual organ but also all other senses. The literal meaning of Brahmacharya is the mode of life which leads to the realisation of Brahman or God.

Q-2. Is it possible to practise Brahmacharya in this modern age?

Ans. Where there is a will there is a way. There is nothing impossible to achieve in life. It is not only possible but essential for the total development of an all-round personality and good character. Retention of *veerya* is life and loss of *veerya* is death. A student who is aware of the power of Brahmacharya will certainly try his best to practise it by all means. Do you know what Swami Vivekananda said, "Do you see simply by the observance of strict Brahmacharya (continence) all learning can be mastered in a very short time–one has an unfailing memory of what one hears or knows but once. It is owing to this want of continence that everything is on the brink of ruin in our country."

Q-3. What are the benefits of practising Brahmacharya?

Ans. It improves the power of concentration and memory. Vedic Knowledge has come down to us only through the memory. Because of strict practise of Brahmacharya students of those days were able to retain the entire Vedas

in their memory. Sexual energy when converted into Ojas, strengthens the brain and the nervous system. It helps to develop mental strength to face challenges in life and sharpens the intellectual faculty. It helps to control the negative emotions such as anger, hatred, jealousy, fear, etc., opens up the reflective and creative faculties of the practitioner and enable him to manifest great talents, creativity and originality. Practice of Brahmacharya also helps us to improve physical health, increases resistance and immunity which keeps a person away from all types of diseases. Most of the psychological problems are caused by animal passions. Brooding over lustful thoughts leads to mental problems, which can be easily avoided by the practise of Brahmacharya. Finally, Brahmacharya leads to spiritual awakening and development of divine qualities such as love, compassion, devotion, gentleness, courage, confidence, fearlessness, forbearance, contentment, tranquillity of the mind, etc.

Q-4. If everyone practises Brahmacharya, how will the creation go on?

Ans. Since we have not created this world, why should we bother about it? It is God

who has created it and therefore he will certainly take care of it. Moreover, in the Bhagvad Gita , Lord himself has declared lust and anger as most sinful and enemy of man here. People are born with different mentalities and tendencies. A person whose mind is full of inertia (*tamas*) is little better than an animal. His animal passions will not allow him even to think of the ideal of Brahmacharya.

Q-5. Does it mean that in order to practise Brahmacharya one should remain a bachelor throughout life?

Ans. If one can remain a bachelor in order to achieve high ideals and has enough strength, one can certainly do so. But for students practice of Brahmacharya is an essential discipline. Even married people can practise Brahmacharya. There are different rules for them.

Q-6. What are the rules for married people?

Ans. God has kept this urge of regeneration in human mind only to perpetuate his creation and not for enjoyment. *Veerya* is

meant to be used only for procreation and not for self-indulgence. For married people Brahmacharya can be broken only when they feel the desire for progeny. If they realise this truth they will not become a slave to lust, nor lose their stock of vital energy. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that after the birth of one or two children, husband and wife should live like a brother and sister directing their minds towards spiritual enlightenment. In *Sanatana Dharma* marriage is considered to be a sacred act. Marriage is not meant for physical enjoyment but only for good progeny. A wife is considered to be a partner in life to practise dharma; she is called *dharmapatni* or *sahadharmini*. Children born out of prayer and self-control will certainly exhibit great virtues, but children born out of lust and over-indulgence will become weak and bereft of divine qualities. Swami Vivekananda had all praise for mother Sita for her wonderful qualities as a wife, when he said, "Sita, purer than purity itself, all patience, all suffering without a murmur, she the ever-chaste and ever-pure wife, she the ideal of the people, the ideal of the Gods, the

great Sita, our national Goddess she must always remain."

Sri Ramakrishna was married to Sri Sarada Devi only to demonstrate to married people that wonderful ideal of chastity in married life. Both were free from carnal passions, led a life of self- control and realised the ultimate goal of life—spiritual enlightenment.

Therefore, controlled sex life is essential for married people. Over indulgence will only lead them to premature old age and early death.

Q-7. Some doctors are of the opinion that practise of Brahmacharya is harmful to health. How far is this true?

Ans. There may be a grain of truth in it when they look at this problem from the psychological point of view. Suppression of the sexual urge may sometimes lead to psychological problems. But just to release sexual impulse through indulgence is not at all a permanent solution to the problem. There are people who practised unbroken Brahmacharya and manifested heroic strength and vigour. They also knew the seriousness

of the problem. But they have handled this problem positively and saved the whole mankind from great disaster, by providing positive methods to sublimate sexual passions. By sublimating this baser instinct we can transform ourselves into a storehouse of tremendous physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual strength. So the solution to the problem is not suppression or self-indulgence but sublimation of sexual impulses.

Q-8. What are the methods to sublimate sexual passions in order to practise perfect Brahma- charya?

Ans. Practice of Brahmacharya is comparatively easy when we cherish great ideals in life. Animals are body-bound creatures. Their entire life is made up of the senses. No human being can enjoy sensual pleasures with the same intensity as animals. Great scientists, poets, artists, musicians, philosophers and spiritual seekers derive immense joy in pursuit of their goals forgetting even the existence of the body. For them sensual pleasure appears insipid and useless compared to intellectual and spiritual

joy. They can easily convert their sexual energy into intellectual and spiritual energy.

Sexual desire has its roots in the mind and therefore it is necessary to change the entire thinking process by systematic training and suggestions. An empty mind is the devil's workshop. It is better to keep the mind always engaged in some kind of useful work. Sitting idle and brooding over negative thoughts is the root cause of mental depression. Thinking and planning about work, and deep study of the subject will not only help us to improve the quality of work but will help to divert the mind from evil thoughts.

PRACTICAL HINTS:

Deep-rooted lustful thoughts in the sub-conscious mind will make their presence felt, sometimes even more violently and with tremendous force, making a person absolutely helpless. When such thoughts arise, one need not be afraid or nervous. Let us face them boldly and they will disappear into thin air. When you are overpowered by lustful thoughts, introspect, analyse, discriminate and replace them with another set of powerful

and positive thoughts and you will succeed in driving them out.

1) Introspection:

i) O my mind, why are you brooding over such dirty thoughts? Don't you know I am a student? I have to concentrate on my studies. If I fail in my examinations I will get a scolding from my parents and teachers, my friends will also discard me; moreover, for a student like me, it is a sin to think of lustful thoughts. So, please concentrate on study and give up thinking of evil thoughts.

ii) O my mind, you want to enjoy sexual pleasures. Don't you know that for students, indulgence in sexual pleasures is a great sin? If something goes wrong how can I show my face to my parents, relatives, friends and society? *Veerya*, a precious gift of God, is not meant for wasting through indulgence. It will only make me weak and bereft of energy and vigour.

iii) O my mind, don't think that nobody will know about your immoral deeds. You may be able to hide your heinous deeds from others; but what about God, who is always sitting in

your heart as the innermost *Self*. He knows everything about you, your thoughts, intentions, words, deeds and everything else. How can you cheat Him?

iv) O my mind, after committing blunders people go for abortion etc. Is it not a sin to kill innocent life? Do you want to indulge in such sinful deeds?

v) O my mind, this body of mine is a temple of God. He dwells within me as the light of consciousness. Is it not my duty to keep this temple pure and clean to receive His blessings? If I indulge in wrong deeds God will be displeased with me.

vi) O my mind, my parents have full faith and trust in me. They have a very high opinion about me. They love me greatly and can never doubt my character. They have given me full freedom. Should I deceive them through such indulgence? If I do something wrong I will be causing untold suffering to my parents. Because of my misbehaviour the entire society will look down upon them.

vii) O my mind, if I indulge in sexual pleasure before marriage, I will be cheating and

deceiving my would-be wife or husband. After marriage if the truth comes out, it will only create suspicion which may lead to misunderstandings, quarrels, harassment, doubts and even separation and divorce. Should I take such a risk?

viii) O my mind, if I waste all my energy before marriage, I will be unfit for married life. I will be physically weak, mentally imbalanced, intellectually poor and spiritually bankrupt. In such a case how will I be able to run my family?

ix) Inspired by the ideal of Brahmacharya, there are many young boys and girls leading a celibate life in order to attain purity of mind to realise God. There are many brahmacharis and sannayasis, nuns, sisters, staying in Ashramas, convents and serving society. If they are able to practise life-long Brahmacharya, why not I also try, at least a bit of it? Even today, when people are practising this ideal of Brahmacharya, certainly it is not impossible.

x) O my mind, don't you know that people commit crimes forced by this most dangerous enemy of man, lust. One impulse of lust makes their entire life miserable. They have to spend

their whole life in a prison house away from their near and dear ones, kith and kin. Every day you read in the paper such cases of rape and murder caused by this deadly enemy; still you hanker after that. For temporary enjoyment you will have to suffer all your life. Poor prisoners! How they weep and cry to meet their relatives and friends but are denied an opportunity to do so. What is the use of repenting after the mistakes have been committed? So, be alert, beware, be careful.

Such powerful suggestions will make your mind serious and thoughtful. Once you are able to convince your mind, it will become your great friend and will protect you always as your very close and dear friend.

2. Study:

Books are our best friends only when we make the right selection. Otherwise, books can be the most dangerous enemies. Today, the entire market is flooded with all types of books. Those who are genuinely interested in practising Brahmacharya should never touch such literature which stimulate the desire for sexual enjoyment. It is an unfortunate state that day and night vulgarity, obscenity, and provocative

pictures, scenes, literature are displayed through newspapers, magazines, and tele media. Today, youngsters are attracted by such literature. They are corrupting their minds by reading such dirty books without discrimination only to land into trouble . They are not aware of the amount of harm they are doing to themselves. The impressions created by reading such books on the subconscious mind can lead them to many psychological and mental disturbances. The habit of reading good, positive, educative, thought-provoking, inspiring, and strengthening literature alone can help them to build right character and total personality. For modern youth, Swami Vivekananda's literature can serve this purpose. It is most relevant, practical and inspiring, particularly for youth to develop perfect character. The mind needs food in the form of great ideas to think and practise. Study of lives and teachings of great personalities and scriptures will satisfy the hunger of the mind which will result in good conduct, behaviour and character.

3. Japa: (Repetition of the Divine Name)

The divine name is a powerful weapon to destroy the demon of lust. Great people have

demonstrated the power of the divine name. They could conquer not only lust but all other negative emotions such as anger, greed. fear, etc., just by repeating the divine name. Repetition of the divine name has tremendous power to root out all negative emotions from the subconscious mind. Whenever you get lustful thoughts, just start repeating God's name. Do it mentally and let no one know what is happening within your mind. The mind cannot think of two thoughts at a time. The moment you start repeating God's name, lustful thoughts will vanish in a moment like vapour. The dark cloud of lust will be carried away by the strong wind of the divine name. Whenever your mind is free, engage it in Japa; otherwise, it will go on brooding over evil thoughts. If you continue the habit of Nama-japa with faith and devotion, it will not only help you to conquer lust but will work like a shield to protect you from psychological disorders.

4. Meditation:

Meditation is a scientific and systematic process through which we can erase the deep-rooted past impressions from the mind. It is

very easy to accumulate undesirable impressions by exposing ourselves to negative forces. But it is very difficult to destroy them. Meditation is a process of churning which replaces the bad impressions with good ones. Those who practise regular meditation will not be easily carried away by negative emotions. They develop tremendous mental strength which enables them to keep harmful emotions perfectly under their control.

5. Prayer:

Self-effort alone is not enough to fight against this deadly enemy, lust. One needs superhuman strength to encounter it. Self-effort when combined with God's grace makes the task easy. To receive divine grace, in order to conquer lust, it is necessary to pray to God with a sincere heart. Lord is the strength of the weak. He will certainly listen to the prayer of a sincere aspirant, who seeks His help to overcome animal passions. Let us pray in this manner:

"O Lord, the support of the lowly, the strength of the weak, my heart is burning with lustful emotions. My mind is weak and is always carried away by powerful, turbulent and restless

senses, in spite of my efforts. To fight against this enemy is like climbing the Mount Everest. My efforts are not sufficient to encounter this enemy. I feel depressed and frustrated when I am overpowered by it. You are the embodiment of strength and virility. Please grant me that supreme, divine strength to conquer this enemy. I seek your help and grace in my sincere efforts to practise Brahmacharya. Your help, your blessings, your grace is the only support for weak minds. Since I have taken refuge in you, please don't forsake me."

6. Attitude:

It is not necessary to run away from society in order to practise Brahmacharya. While living in the world, mixing with people and leading a normal, active life one can practise Brahmacharya just by changing one's attitude. Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinobha Bhave, Paramahamsa Yogananda lived in this world like you and me, led a very active life, mixed with people freely but were always above all temptations. How could they achieve that? By

developing the right attitude. Here are few hints to cultivate that attitude.

i) Every man should look upon every woman as his mother, sister or daughter except his wife. Similarly, every woman should look upon every man as her father, brother or son except her husband.

ii) The Divine Mother herself has taken the form of all women in this world. Therefore, look upon every woman as the manifestation of the Divine Mother.

iii) The Spirit within the body has no sex. Man-woman, black-white, short-tall—all these differences are only on the physical level. Self or Atman is beyond gender, caste, creed and all such attributes. Transcend the idea of body; look upon everyone as divine spirit or self or soul. Possess childlike innocence while dealing with the opposite sex. Children are free from the sex idea. Let us respect and admire the beauty of the soul, beauty of character, the beauty of purity and never be carried away by the physical appearance of man or woman.

Since it is not possible to change the world, let us change ourselves. Let us change our

attitude towards others and nobody will dare to approach you with a wrong motive.

7. Food:

Food plays a vital role in controlling sexual passions. One who has not been able to control his tongue, will never be able to control other senses. Food is meant for the preservation of the body and not for satisfying the palate. One should take just enough for the sustenance of the body and no more. Our diet should be healthy and well-balanced. The habit of eating in between meals must be given up. As far as possible, one must avoid rich food. Eating too much of sweets, oil, spices, chilli and tasty dishes are harmful to the practise of Brahmacharya. Over-eating leads to indigestion which makes the task more difficult.

8. Exercise:

In order to practise Brahmacharya we need to burn the excess energy in the body. Accumulated energy in the body gives rise to lustful thoughts and bad dreams. Regular physical activities or exercise such as yogasanas, walking, swimming will keep the body fit and free from

diseases. A sick and weak body cannot withstand the force of lust and anger and often succumbs to temptations.

9. Will-power:

To fight against lust is not an easy task. Deep-rooted impressions are so powerful that a little carelessness or over-confidence can lead to a drastic fall. But one need not be afraid because it is difficult; it will bring great joy when we succeed in our practice. Even a little success will give us a sense of satisfaction. This is a great challenge, and heroic souls alone can accept it since it needs tremendous will-power. In order to strengthen our will, it is better to take resolutions or vows. It does not mean we are able to observe the vows completely from the very beginning, but it means that honest and sincere efforts are made in order to reach perfection.

10) Some More Suggestions:

1) Keep away from bad habits such as smoking, drinking, drugs, etc., which excite the nervous system and stimulate sexual desire.

2) Keep your body, clothes and surroundings neat and clean

3) Be moderate in everything. Over-exertion—mental as well as physical—should be avoided.

4) Whenever you feel a craving for sexual indulgence take a cold water bath. It will cool down the heat of passion.

5) If free mixing with the opposite sex gives rise to lustful thoughts causing sexual excitement in your mind, it is better to keep away from such associations.

6) Idle gossip and indecent talk leads to distractions of mind. Therefore, keep yourself away from such useless gossip.

7) Fasting twice a month (Ekadasi days) will help to curb the senses and to control the excess energy in the body.

8) Regular practice of pranayama, simple breathing exercises twice a day for 10 minutes at a time will make your mind calm.

9) 'Simple living and high thinking': let this be your motto; clothes are meant for protecting and covering the body and not for decoration.

Fancy and fashionable dresses will only increase your attachment to the body, making practice of Brahmacharya difficult.

10) Talking, listening, viewing things which stimulate the urge for sexual enjoyment should be shunned.

11) Always keep good company. Be selective while choosing friends. Associate with holy and noble people and avoid bad company by all means.

Q-9. Some are of the opinion that long practice of Brahmacharya may lead to impotency. Is it true?

Ans. Perfect control over lust and impotency are totally different things. Don't get confused and mix them up. A person who has self-control is not an impotent person; but he has perfect control over his animal passions. He is not a slave to lust; whereas an impotent person is not free from lust but due to some biological disorder he is unfit for ordinary worldly life.

Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra, a man of perfect control, lived with his young wife, Sita, for many years in the forest but was never

overpowered by lust. That does not mean that he was impotent. He broke Brahmacharya only after returning to Ayodhya when he felt the need for progeny. The result was the birth of two heroic, bright, courageous, bold, intelligent, strong, fearless and glorious children, Lava and Kusha.

Q-10. How to avoid and prevent wet dreams? Are they harmful to health?

Ans. It's a natural phenomenon. With the growth of the body there will be a change in hormones. Those hormones create disturbances and restlessness in the minds of adolescents. These changes in the body and the mind give rise to lustful thoughts, which find expression through wet dreams. There are several other reasons too. Over-eating, over-sleeping, exciting food, exposure to stimulating pictures and literature, etc. Since this is a natural process, one need not get panicky about it. Loss of *veerya* in dream is not so harmful. But one should not lose *veerya* consciously by all sorts of artificial methods and indulgence. In order to minimise wet dreams certain precautions are to be taken.

1. Light food at night.

2. Cold water bath

3. Reading good books, repetition of God's name and sincere prayer before going to bed.

4. Looking at the picture of God before falling asleep.

5. Early to bed and early to rise will help in minimising wet dreams. Most of the dreams occur in the early hours of the morning. Those who develop the habit of getting up early in the morning can easily avoid wet dreams.

Q-11. Is it possible for those who have lost *veerya* in the beginning out of ignorance but are interested in practising Brahmacharya again?

Ans. There is no need to feel guilty or depressed on account of this. Swami Vivekananda said that man travels not from error to truth, but from lower truth to higher truth. The beauty of human birth is that we can undo what we have done. The solution to the problems is not in brooding over problems but thinking of the strength to overcome them. Let us forget about the past and taking fresh resolutions, start with new zeal and enthusiasm.

Even married people can practise Brahmacharya. Mahatma Gandhi took a vow of Brahmacharya in 1906, at the age of 37. He could succeed considerably in his efforts. It was the power of Brahmacharya that gave him a tremendous moral and spiritual strength to fight for freedom.

Q.12. What is the role of Brahmacharya in spiritual life?

Ans. According to *Sanatana Dharma*, the goal of human life is freedom. That can be achieved only through the realisation of our real nature. We know everything about this external world through our senses but are ignorant about our innermost self. How beautifully a poet has expressed this idea! 'How wretched is the man, with honours crowned, who having not the one thing needful found, dies known to all but himself unknown!' Self-knowledge cuts asunder all relative bondages such as birth, death, old age and sufferings. Realising the immortal soul within this mortal body, one attains freedom, eternal life, eternal peace and infinite happiness. In order to realise this truth, one has to transcend body consciousness. Self-control is an essential

requisite for progress in spiritual life. Indulgence in sense enjoyment only strengthens our body-consciousness, obstructing the way towards spiritual realisation. The sages of Vedic period were married; at the same time they were men of realisation because of their perfect self-control.

A weak mind and a weak body are not fit for higher realisation. To withstand long hours of meditation one needs strong nerves and a chaste brain. An unchaste brain gets heated even by a little practice of meditation. Headache, trembling of the body, hallucinations these are all signs of a weak mind and a weak brain. Practice of Brahmacharya makes brain and nerves strong by transforming sexual energy into Ojas. Therefore, almost all spiritual organizations insist on the practice of Brahmacharya for speedy progress in spiritual life.

Q.13. The West does not believe in the ideal of Brahmacharya; still people there are strong and live a long life. How is this so?

Ans. Do you mean that we are perfect in this matter? Rather, we are becoming worse than animals. In the list of AIDS and HIV cases.

India's name figures among the top few countries. In spite of having such a wonderful cultural heritage, how have we become so degraded? There are a good number of people in the West who, realising the emptiness of materialism, are turning towards spirituality. Christianity also emphasises the ideal of chastity. Poverty, chastity and obedience are the three main pillars of Christianity. Inspired by these ideals there are many sisters, nuns, fathers leading chaste lives in the service of God. Saint Francis of Assisi, Mother Teresa of Avila and many Christian mystics have practised and preached this ideal of chastity. There are many foreigners settled in India and leading pure lives in different Ashramas and holy places. They are disgusted with sensual pleasures and are earnestly seeking real peace and happiness. They are looking towards India for spiritual guidance. It is high time that we equip ourselves by studying and practising these great eternal values in order to share this treasure with others.

Just living long and becoming physically strong is not the purpose of human life. Plants and trees can also live for thousands of years. There are animals like elephants, tigers, lions, and bulls, much stronger than human beings.

But brute strength is not enough for human growth. The practice of Brahmacharya alone can give us not only physical but mental, intellectual and spiritual strength, resulting in infinite peace and happiness.

Q.14. What is Ojas?

Ans. Ojas is not something that you can see through your physical eyes. It is like butter hidden in the milk. Ojas is a refined and purified part of human energy. By the constant practice of Brahmacharya this *veerya* again is transformed into Ojas. Here are the words of Swami Vivekananda on Ojas:

All the forces that are working in the body in their highest become Ojas. You must remember that it is only a question of transformation. The same forces that are working as muscular energy will be changed into Ojas. That part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy, in sexual thought, when checked and controlled, easily changes into Ojas.

The great sexual force, raised from animal action and sent upward to the great dynamo of the human system, the brain, and there stored

up, becomes Ojas or spiritual force. All good thought, all prayer, resolves a part of that animal energy into Ojas and helps to give us spiritual power.

Of all the energies that are in the human body the highest is Ojas. This Ojas is stored up in the brain, and the more Ojas is in a man's head, the more powerful he is, the more intellectual, the more spiritually strong.

It is only the chaste man or woman who can make Ojas rise and store it in the brain; that is why chastity has always been considered the highest virtue. A man feels that if he is unchaste, spirituality goes away, he loses mental vigour and moral stamina. That is why in all religious orders in the world which have produced spiritual giants, you will always find absolute chastity insisted upon.

Ojas is that which makes a difference between one man and another. The man who has much Ojas is the leader of men. Ojas gives them a tremendous power of attracting people.

This Ojas is the real energy and in human beings alone this storage of Ojas is to be accomplished. One in whom the whole animal sex-force has been transformed into Ojas is a god. He speaks with power, and his words regenerate the world.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LUST

I am lust. I am most powerful and I could even defeat the so-called great heroes. Though I stay very close to human beings, close within their minds, they are not able to detect me. Even the learned ones are unable to trace my origin. Sometimes I attack them directly, sometimes when they try to capture me I take a different route altogether which no one can even imagine. I catch them unawares. I present myself in the form of sympathy, compassion, love and slowly appear before them in my real form. Some wise ones try to catch me even in those forms; then I pretend as if I am left out of their minds altogether, but the moment they think that I am out they try to behave carelessly out of over-confidence, and I again show my face to them unawares. I have no mercy. I do not care what happens to the victims. That is not my business. My job is to swallow as many as possible and burn them alive. I am the descendant of demons. In our race of danavas, we don't care much for relations. When I enter into the minds of people, the very first thing that I do is to convert them into demons. I make them forget all relations and they commit heinous deeds. A lustful father does not think

about his relations with his daughter, overpowered by me. I create doubt and suspicion in the minds of people. I try to break families, creating suspicion in their minds. Our ancestors were not that powerful because people used to believe in God. But in Kaliyuga, it is very easy for me to catch my prey. People have no faith in divine power. I am utterly helpless when people take shelter under the divine protection and can never go near them. Their weapon of divine name makes me weak and powerless. I could delude Ravana, though he belongs to our race but was very arrogant and dominating. In order to teach him a lesson, I influenced him to abduct Sita, and destroyed him. I could capture even the great Vishwamitra and he fell flat just seeing the beauty of Menaka. But he was a strong-willed man, a hero, indeed; ultimately I had to accept my defeat, when he became Brahmarshi Vishwamitra. Great kings and ministers lost their kingdom when they came under my spell. Their self-indulgence made them weak and careless only to be captured by enemies. I have ruined even the demi-gods like Indra, who committed a blunder with Ahalya, wife of the great sage, Gautama. I even tried to capture

Lord Rama, when I presented myself in the form of Shurpanakha. But Lord Rama could sense my presence in Shurpanakha and I had to accept my defeat; but poor Shurpanakha had to suffer on account of my mischief. I tried even to distract the mind of Lord Shiva when he was in deep meditation. But he could sense my presence and burnt me into ashes by opening his third eye of knowledge. I am terribly afraid of him. I usually don't want to destroy the people of my race, but at the command of Lord Narayana I had to destroy Bhasmasura when the Lord Himself took the form of Mohini. When I capture the mind of a person, I make him blind; that's why they say love is blind. When I possess the mind then even an ugly face appears to be a beautiful one for a lustful person. Wherever I go, my friends always accompany me only to increase my power. I am like a fire and they are like ghee and butter. They are anger, jealousy, greed, hatred, egotism, fear, attachment, etc. Most of the criminals are victims of our mischief. The whole world is under my grip. When I forget that it is the Lord's creation and He is the ruler and out of ego start thinking that I am creating the world, I am ruling the world,

the Lord appears on this earth as an incarnation taking the human body only to crush my ego and make me realise that it is He who rules and not I. I am afraid of that *supreme being*. As long as people follow His teachings and take refuge in Him by cultivating devotion to His lotus feet, I keep myself away, but again when they forget the glory and power of God and start doubting His very existence, I appear in my terrible world- bewitching form only to attack them mercilessly. That's why the Incarnation of this age Sri Ramakrishna said, 'O good man, beware of lust and greed' *(Sadhu Savdhan)*.

WHAT THEY SAY

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

To be able to realise God, one must practise absolute continence. Sages like Shukadeva are examples of an *urdhvareta*. Their chastity was absolutely unbroken. There is another class, who previously have had discharges of semen, but who later on have controlled them. A man controlling the seminal fluid for twelve years develops a special power. He grows a new inner nerve called the nerve of memory. Through this

nerve he remembers all, he understands all.

Loss of semen impairs strength. But it does not injure one if one loses it in a dream. That semen one gets from food. What remains after nocturnal discharge is enough. But one must not know a woman.

The semen that remains after nocturnal discharge is very 'refined'. The Lahas kept jars of molasses in their house. Every jar had a hole in it. After a year they found that the molasses had crystallised like sugar candy. The unnecessary watery part had leaked out through the hole.

JESUS CHRIST

You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery'. But now I tell you, anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of committing adultery with her in his heart. So if your right eye causes you to sin, take it out and throw it away. It is much better for you to lose a part of your body, than to have your whole body thrown into hell. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is much better for you to lose one of your limbs than for your whole body to go to hell.

BHAGAVAN BUDDHA

If the woman be old, regard her as your mother; if young, as your sister, if very young, as your child.

Better far, with red-hot irons bore out both your eyes, than encourage in yourselves sensual thoughts, or look upon a woman's form with lustful desires.

Better fall into the fierce tiger's mouth, or under the sharp knife of the executioner, than to dwell with a woman and excite in yourself lustful thoughts. Therefore, I say, restrain the heat, give it no unbridled license.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Civilization, true civilization, should mean the power of taking the animal-man out of his sense-life—by giving him visions and tastes of planes much higher—and not external comforts.

Chastity is the life of a nation. Do you not find in history that the first death-sign of a nation has been unchastity? When that has entered, the end of the race is in sight.

No force can be created; it can only be directed. Therefore we must learn to control the grand powers that are already in our hands

and by will-power make them spiritual instead of merely animal. Thus it is clearly seen that chastity is the cornerstone of all morality and of all religion.

Transform the sexual energy into spiritual energy, but do not emasculate, because that is throwing away the power. The stronger this sexual force, the more can be done with it. Only a powerful current of water can do hydraulic mining.

Complete continence gives great intellectual and spiritual power. The Brahmacharin must be sexually pure in thought, word and deed.

Unchaste imagination is as bad as unchaste action.

The purer the mind, the easier it is to control it. Purity of the mind must be insisted upon if you would control it. Perfect morality is the all in all of complete control over mind.

Be pure first and you will have power. The chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will-power. Continence gives wonderful control over mankind. The spiritual leaders of men have been very continent and that is what gave them power.

Modern psychologists have done a great service to humanity by their researches into the nature of the unconscious, dreams, motivation, complexes, repression, etc. But very many of them have in effect done an equal amount of harm by propagating the theory of free expression. Though many eminent psychoanalysts have protested against this abuse of a noble science, the idea that suppression of sex is harmful has rapidly gained popularity in the West. The Yoga psychology, on the contrary, believes that conscious suppression of sex with a spiritual aim is not only not harmful but also absolutely essential. Repression may be dangerous, but not Yogic suppression followed by sublimation of the sex instinct through love of God and meditation. At first this may lead to tension and conflicts. But then, is there any higher venture which does not cause some tension or struggle? The true and earnest spiritual aspirant soon overcomes all internal troubles, and through divine Grace reaches a higher plane where he is free from the conflicts of the lower planes.

However, through physical means alone one can never control sex which has its roots deep within the personality structure. The most important point is to tackle the problem at the mental level. We find that imagination plays a dominant role in our life.

The main point to note is that the mind should never be allowed to form wrong pictures and brood over them. This is possible only by the practice of producing counter thoughts. This is what Patanjali advises us to do in his Yoga-Sutras: "To obstruct thoughts which are inimical to Yoga, contrary thoughts should be brought." This is an important technique of great help to spiritual aspirants. By constantly thinking good thoughts the whole old bad thought structure can be changed. We may be near a bad or impure thing physically, but at the same time can be very far from it mentally and psychically. In order to remain unaffected, we should raise a strong mental barrier to insulate ourselves on the thought plane. But this is not enough. It is a negative process. We should bring in a positive factor also, i.e. we should think of the Divine or of some holy Personality most intensely, filling our whole mind with that

thought. Draw yourself away physically and mentally, and then give your whole mind and attention to the Divine alone, and do not allow it to stray away towards the object of temptation. Do not allow yourself to go near it either physically or mentally. Then, in a very easy and natural way, we learn to draw ourselves away from the things and persons that tempt us, to raise a strong barrier between them and us, and to remain unaffected.

Physical nearness is not the only danger. The person who tempts us may be far away physically, but we feel a tremendous attraction for him or her on the thought plane. So even when the person who attracts us or the object that tempts us is only on the thought plane and not physically near, we should do exactly and scrupulously what we are told to do on the physical plane, i.e. we should in no way communicate with that person, but should dissociate ourselves mentally from him or her, draw our mind away from all thoughts connected with the object of temptation, and raise a strong barrier or even a feeling of loathing or disgust for that person. And, after having done that, we should see that we give

all our thoughts and feelings to the Divine alone. Creating a strong dislike or disgust for the object of temptation is not the ultimate solution, but in many cases it proves to be very helpful as a stepping-stone to the sublimation of feelings and desires, and so it should be made use of.

It is a very vital point to do this consciously, deliberately, in a systematic way. At the same time, one may do more of japa, practise more meditation and prayer, repeat some elevating passages even if the mind is divided or is in a state of unrest, even if there is a terrible tug-of-war going on in the mind. Somehow or other, in the case of all aspirants, a strong counter-current of spiritual thought is to be raised.

Practically speaking, all our troubles are more mental than physical, and unless there be mental troubles there can never be any physical ones. Unless something in us responds to the outer stimulus, whatever it may be, there can be no object of temptation. So the defect lies in us more than in others.

If we are not able to create the higher mood as soon as the trouble arises, we should

first draw ourselves away from the person or object of temptation and then try to create that mood. There should be a conscious, deliberate cutting off in all such cases. Those who are always in higher mood will experience less temptations. It is only when a man forgets God or his higher self and dwells on the worldly plane, that temptations come upon him frequently. Always keep a good stock of holy imaginations and ideas, so that you can use them as weapons the moment any undesirable thought or feeling arises and tries to find some expression on the mental or physical plane. Suppose a person attracts you. Raise at once a very intense counter-picture of your *Istam* against that of the other person. Imagine that the person is dragging you down and think at the same time strongly of your *Istam* or chosen ideal, setting the picture of your *Istam* against that of the other person. Thus it becomes easier to evade the subtle charm of the object of temptation and change the thoughts and feelings regarding it. But one should love one's chosen ideal intensely. Those who love God intensely are not easily affected by the charms of physical beauty and sex.

I can affirm, without the slightest hesitation, from my own experience as well as that of others, that sexual enjoyment is not only not necessary for, but is positively injurious to health. All the strength of body and mind that has taken long to acquire is lost all at once by a single dissipation of the vital energy. It takes a long time to regain this lost vitality, and even then there is no saying that it can be thoroughly recovered. A broken mirror may be mended and made to do its work, but it can never be anything but a broken mirror.

When so strict is the Law of Brahmacharya, what shall we say of those guilty of the unpardonable sin of illegitimate sexual enjoyment? The evil arising from adultery and prostitution is a vital question of religion and morality and cannot be fully dealt with in a treatise on health. Here we are only concerned to point out how thousands who are guilty of these sins are afflicted by venereal diseases. God is merciful in this that the punishment swiftly overtakes the sinners. Their short span of life is spent in abject

bondage to quacks in a futile quest after a remedy for their ills. If adultery and prostitution disappear, at least half the present number of doctors would find their occupation gone. So inextricably indeed has venereal disease caught mankind in its clutches that thoughtful medical men have been forced to admit that so long as adultery and prostitution continue, there is no hope for the human race, all the discoveries of curative medicine notwithstanding. The medicines for these diseases are so poisonous that although they may appear to have done some good for the time being, they give rise to other and still more terrible diseases which are transmitted from generation to generation.

I hold that life of perfect continence in thought, speech and action is necessary for reaching spiritual perfection. And the nation that does not possess such men is the poorer for the want.

I have not a shadow of doubt that married people, if they wished well to the country and wanted to see India become a nation of strong and handsome full-formed men and women, would practise perfect self-restraint.

Let me make it clear that those who desire to observe Brahmacharya with a view to realizing God need not despair, provided their faith in God is equal to their confidence in their own effort. Therefore, His name and His grace are the last resources of the aspirant after Moksha.

❁ ❁ ❁

Save the spiritual store in your body by
observing continence.

– Swami Vivekananda

Complete continence gives great
intellectual and spiritual power.

– Swami Vivekananda

HOW SRI RAMAKRISHNA TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES

Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated through his life that the practice of perfect Brahmacharya is possible even for the married people. When Sarada Devi asked him, 'How do you look upon me?' Straight came the reply from Sri Ramakrishna, 'The Divine Mother Bhavatarini who is in the temple, the mother who has given birth to this body, and staying in Nahabat now and who is massaging my feet are one and the same.' He treated every woman as the manifestation of the Divine Mother, and worshipped his own wife as Mother Shodashi. When Sri Ramakrishna asked her, 'Have you come here to drag me down to the worldly life? She also gave a befitting reply, 'Why should I drag you down to the worldly life? I have come here only to help you on your path.' Both of them were free from carnal desire, and there was perfect understanding between them. By leading a pure celibate life both could attain the ultimate goal of life. Their love for each other was not based on physical relations. Ordinary

mortals can never understand even an iota of that selfless and divine love. Sri Ramakrishna was a perfect teacher and could guide his young disciples on the path of spirituality according to their mental attitude. Here are a few examples.

1. One day, his young disciple Jogin (later Yogananda) was very much disturbed by lustful thoughts and approaching Sri Ramakrishna for a remedy asked, "Sir, could you teach me how to conquer lust?" The simple reply of the Master was, "Chant the name of Hari (Lord), then it will go." This simple remedy did not convince Jogin. He thought that the Master did not know any practical method and had prescribed something useless. The next day, Jogin went straight to a hathayogi, and while he sat listening to the yogi, Sri Ramakrishna arrived. The Master took Jogin's hand and asked Jogin to follow him. While they were walking towards his room, the Master said, "Why did you go there? Don't do that. Your mind will only stick to the body if you learn those techniques of hathayogi. It will not thirst for God."

Jogin again doubted Sri Ramakrishna. He thought that the Master had discouraged him from visiting the hathayogi to keep him from running away. However, he thought again, "Why shouldn't I do what he told me to do and see what happens?" Later, Jogin said: "Thinking thus, I took the name of Hari with a concentrated mind. And as a matter of fact, shortly afterwards I began to experience the tangible results mentioned by the Master." Swami Vivekananda complimented the great achievement of his brother disciple Jogin and once said, "If there is anyone amongst us who has conquered lust in all respects, it is Jogin."

2. Harinath, another young disciple, later known as Swami Turiyananda, approached him with the same question, "Sir, how can one become free from lust completely?" Sri Ramakrishna replied, "Why should it go, my boy? Give it a turn in another direction. What is lust? It is the desire to get. So desire to get God, and strengthen this desire greatly." Sri Ramakrishna's way of teaching was simple, natural and very effective. He did not ask his disciples to mortify themselves. He said, "The more you go towards the east, the farther you

will be away from the west." The more you grow in your love for God, the more your lust, anger, and jealousy will recede.

Another day, Harinath said to Sri Ramakrishna that he was not at all interested in women; in fact, he could not bear them. To this the Master replied: "You talk like a fool! Looking down upon women! Why? They are the manifestation of the Divine Mother. Bow down to them with respect. That is the only way to escape from their snares." These fiery words permanently changed Harinath's attitude towards women.

3. Yet another disciple, Hariprasanna, had the same problem. The Master advised him quite differently. Hariprasanna himself narrated thus: "On that day, the Master said to me: 'Never get involved with women. Always be careful. Let there be no stain on your character. Never look at a woman, even if she is made out of gold,"

Sri Ramakrishna's advice to young Hariprasanna was not to be very intimate with women in order to overcome lust; but in the case of Vivekananda his advice was quite different. When Hariprasanna (Swami

Vijnanananda) questioned Swami Vivekananda about his close association with women, the latter gave a reply that made him realise the greatness of the Master's teachings. Here is that incident.

Seeing Swamiji alone in his room, Vijnanananda asked him frankly: "Swamiji, while you were in the West you associated with the women there; but didn't the Master teach the contrary in this respect? He emphatically told me not to be close to women, however devoted they might be, so I am wondering why you did so. To this doubt, Swamiji's reply was, 'Well, Peshan (Hariprasanna), do you think that what you have understood about the Master is all that he is? What do you know about the Master? Do you know that the Master eradicated the idea of the difference between male and female from my mind? Is there any distinction of sex in the Atman? Moreover, the Master came for the good of the entire world. Did he come to liberate only men? He will save all — both men and women. You people want to belittle the Master by measuring him with the yardstick of your own intellect.

Whatever the Master told you is true; you follow that implicitly. But to me his instructions were different. He not only gave me instructions, he clearly showed me everything. He holds my hands—whatever he makes me do, I do."

From these examples, we understand that Sri Ramakrishna instructed his disciples to overcome lust according to their frame of mind. Those who have enjoyed the infinite bliss of the Atman, or their own self, will cease to have any attraction for worldly enjoyment.

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

1. SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Narendranath (later Swami Vivekananda) also had to face some critical situations during his student life. How did he face them to protect his Brahmacharya? Here is an incident:

To prepare for his examinations, he was studying in a separate room, where there was less noise and fewer distractions. In this room Naren often used to sing between his bouts of study. There was a young widow in the house opposite, across the lane. She often

came and stood by her window, unknown to him, and listened to him singing. On one occasion, she crossed over from her house, and in the dim light Narendranath saw her standing in the doorway of his room. She was young, and she had come. She had seen him often without his knowledge, and bore great love for him. She had heard him singing this night. To her it was romantic. Narendranath was amazed. He had never seen the girl before. He fell at her feet. "Mother! Mother!" he exclaimed, emphasising the word, "why have you come? Let me regard you as I would my own mother". The girl understood. A moment later, Naren was alone. The next day he changed his room and was never seen in that room again.

In another incident, Narendranath had to face almost the same situation. But this time he was under the protection of Sri Ramakrishna, since he accepted him as his Guru.

Some of his wealthy friends one day invited him for a drive to their garden in the suburbs of Kolkota. He consented joyfully, having no idea what sort of an evening drive

it would be. They stopped in front of a house, and all alighted and entered the grounds where a garden party was being held. These people were merry-makers. Naren enjoyed their singing, and sang himself. After some time he grew tired and was told that he might rest comfortably in a room close by. His friends, seeing him alone sent a dancing girl to amuse him. He was as simple as a child and talked to her like a brother. She told him many interesting things about her life, about her sorrows and misfortunes. Seeing that she had engaged all his interest and sympathy she misinterpreted his feelings and sought to entice him. Instantly, he remembered Sri Ramakrishna and thought of God. He became serious, started to his feet, and said to the girl, "Excuse me, I must be going now. I have a genuine sympathy for you and wish you well. If you know that it is a weakness to lead such a life, you will get over it some day."

During his visit to Egypt, Swamiji went to Cairo along with his followers to visit a famous museum. One day, while sightseeing in Cairo, they found themselves in a squalid street inhabited by women of ill-fame. As

Madam Calve later told the story, a group of women sitting on a bench in the shadow of a dilapidated building began calling to the Swami and laughing loudly. His friends tried to hurry him on, but he detached himself from them and approached the bench. "Poor children!" he said, and he began to weep. The women were silenced and abashed. One of them leaned forward and kissed the hem of his robe, murmuring, "Man of God! Man of God!" Presently, he joined his party, and they walked on.

2. MAHATMA GANDHI

Putlibai, a pious and devoted mother of Mohandas, was in a dilemma when Mohandas asked her permission to go to London for higher studies. She feared that young Mohan would not be able to resist temptation in a foreign land when he was alone there. At the same time, she did not want to be an obstacle in his pursuit of higher studies. Mohandas could read her mind and said, "Mother, you don't worry about me, I shall never succumb to the temptation; if you suspect me, I am prepared to promise you

whatever you ask me for. Putlibai was relieved of tension. She took the boy to their family Guru, and asked him to take a vow that he would never touch wine, meat and woman. Mohandas gladly agreed to these conditions and promised his mother that he would stick to his vows without the slightest deviation. It was not an easy task. How much he had to struggle to keep his promises! But, of course, he could succeed in his attempt and that is what made him the Mahatma.

Here are some incidents of his heroic efforts to fight against lust.

When Mohandas was in England, how he could handle a delicate situation is given below in his own words.

"During the last year, as far as I can remember, of my stay in England, that is, in 1890, there was a vegetarian conference at Portsmouth to which an Indian friend and I were invited. Portsmouth is a sea-port with a large naval population. It has many houses with women of ill fame. The women were not actually prostitutes, but at the same time were not very scrupulous about their morals. We were put up in one of these houses.

Needless to say, the reception committee did not know anything about it. It would have been difficult in a town like Portsmouth to find out which were good lodgings and which were bad for occasional travellers like us.

We returned from the conference in the evening. After dinner we sat down to play a rubber of bridge, in which our landlady joined, as is customary in England even in respectable households. Every player indulges in innocent jokes as a matter of course, but here my companion and our hostess began to make indecent ones as well. I did not know that my friend was an adept in the art. It captured me and I also joined in. Just when I was about to go beyond the limit, leaving the cards and the game to themselves, God through the good companion uttered the blessed warning: 'Whence this devil in you, my boy? Be off, quick!'

I was ashamed. I took the warning, and expressed within myself gratitude to my friend. Remembering the vow I had taken before my mother, I fled from the scene. To my room I went quaking, trembling, and with beating heart, like a quarry escaped from its pursuer.

I recall this as the first occasion on which a woman, moved me to lust. I passed that night sleeplessly, all kinds of thoughts assailing me. Should I leave this house? Should I run away from the place? Where was I? What would happen to me if I had not my wits about me? I decided to act thenceforth with great caution not to leave the house, but somehow leave Portsmouth. The conference was not to go on for more than two days, and I remember I left Portsmouth the next evening, my companion staying there some time longer.

Here is another incident from Gandhiji's life: When he was on the way to South Africa by ship in April 1893, Gandhiji became a close friend of a captain. When their ship anchored at Zanzibar port, how he was caught unawares, Gandhiji narrates: After Lamu the next port was Mombasa and then Zanzibar. The halt here was a long one—eight to ten days—and we then changed to another boat.

The captain liked me much but the liking took an undesirable turn. He invited an English friend and me to accompany him on an outing, and we all went ashore in his boat. I had not the least notion of what the outing meant. And little did the captain know what

an ignoramus I was in such matters. We were taken to some Negro women's quarters by a tout. We were each shown into a room. I simply stood there dumb with shame. Heaven only knows what the poor woman must have thought of me. When the captain called me I came out just as I had gone in. He saw my innocence. At first I felt very much ashamed, but as I could not think of the thing except with horror, the sense of shame wore away, and I thanked God that the sight of the woman had not moved me in the least. I was disgusted at my weakness and pitied myself for not having had the courage to refuse to go into the room.

This in my life was the third trial of its kind. Many a youth, innocent at first, must have been drawn into sin by a false sense of shame. I could claim no credit for having come out unscathed. I could have credit if I had refused to enter that room. I most entirely thank the All-merciful for having saved me. The incident increased my faith in God and taught me, to a certain extent, to cast off false shame.

3. LAKSHMANA

Lakshmana sacrificed all his comforts and luxuries, all his enjoyments and pleasures in order to serve his dear brother Sri Rama and mother Sita Devi. For fourteen years, he was like a security guard to Rama. He guarded them day and night. Fourteen years of unbroken Brahmacharya gave him such a tremendous power that he could kill Meghanada or Indrajit, son of Ravana, whom even Indra could not defeat. This Lakshmana lived with Rama and Sita, but what a wonderful character! During his stay with them, not once did he glance at the face of Sita even by mistake. When the upper garment and ornaments were shown by Sugriva, Rama cried out in great grief, and asked Lakshmana to identify them. Lakshmana's answer to this appeal for confirmation is well known. He said, "I know only some; I have never raised my eyes and looked her in the face. I always saw her feet to which I bowed in reverence. I can't identify the armlet or the earrings—I can see the nupura."

4. HANUMAN

Swami Vivekananda exhorted our youth to follow the ideal of Mahavira Hanuman when he praised his character in glowing terms.

'You have now to make the character of Mahavira your ideal. See how at the command of Ramachandra he crossed the ocean. He had no care for life or death! He was a perfect master of his senses and wonderfully sagacious. You have now to build your life on this great ideal of personal service. Through that, all the other ideals will gradually manifest themselves in life. Obedience to the Guru without questioning, and strict observance of Brahmacharya—this is the secret of success. As on the one hand Hanuman represents the ideal of service, so on the other he represents leonine courage, striking the whole world with awe. He has not the least hesitation in sacrificing his life for the good of Rama—a supreme indifference to everything except the service of Rama. Only the carrying out of Sri Rama's behest is the one vow of his life! Such whole-

hearted devotion is wanted.

The damaru and horn have to be sounded, drums are to be beaten so as to raise the deep and martial notes, and with "Mahavira, Mahavira" on your lips and shouting "Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom", the quarters are to be reverberated. The music which awakens only the softer feelings of man is to be stopped now for some time.

GLORY OF BRAHMACHARYA

आयुस्तेजो बलं वीर्यं प्रज्ञाश्री महद्यश :
पुण्यं च मत्प्रियत्वं च लभ्यते ब्रह्मचर्यया ।।

Practice of Brahmacharya will give one long life, tejas (lustre), bodily strength, valour, mental strength, virility, brilliance, wealth, great fame, merit and will make the practitioner dear to the Lord.

ऊर्ध्वरेता जितक्रोधो नियताशी य संयमी ।
निग्रहाग्रहश्शक्त स्यत्यसंधो भेवेद्दषिः ।।

He who practises Brahmacharya and is free from anger, moderate in his habit of eating, self-controlled, energetic, and truthful becomes a Sage.

न तपस्तप इत्याहब्रह्माचर्यं तपोत्तमम् ।
ऊर्ध्वरेताभवेद्यस्तु स देवो न तु मानुष : ।।

Penance is not tapas. Brahmacharya is supreme tapas. A man of perfect continence is not man but God himself.

मृत्युर्व्याधि जरानाशि पीयूषं परमौषधम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यं महद्यत्नं सत्यमेव वदाम्यहम् ।।

The nectar and the supreme medicine; to overcome death, cure disease and bear with old age is Brahmacharya, that can be attained only through great effort. This is the truth that I bespeak to you.

शान्तिं कान्तिं स्मृतिं ज्ञानमारोग्यं चापी सन्ततिम् ।
य इच्छति महद्धर्मं ब्रह्मचर्यं चरेदिह ।।

Those who are desirous of peace, tejas, good memory, knowledge, health and good progeny should practise this great dharma of Brahmacharya.

ब्रह्मचर्यं परं ज्ञानं ब्रह्मचर्यं परं बलम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमयोह्यात्मा ब्रह्मचर्येव तिष्ठति ।।

Brahmacharya is supreme knowledge. Brahmacharya is supreme strength. God is of

the form of Brahmacharya and is in Brahmacharya.

ब्रह्मचर्यं नमस्कृ त्य चासाध्यं साधयाम्यहम् ।
सर्वलक्षणहीनत्वं हन्यते ब्रह्मचर्यया ।।

I bow down to Brahmacharya which made impossible possible for me. All evils and weaknesses can be eliminated by Brahmacharya.

मरणं बिन्दुपातेन जीवनं बिन्दुधारणात् ।
तस्मादतियत्नेन कुरुते बिन्दुधारणम् ।।

Loss of Veerya is death. Retention of Veerya is life. Therefore one must preserve it with great effort.

ब्रह्मचर्यमवाप्तस्य सुकरश्चित्तनिग्रह : ।
भवेद्रिक्तस्य तेनासौ कष्टात्कष्टतरो ध्रुवम् ।।

Mind control becomes very easy for one who practises Brahmacharya. For one devoid of this virtue, mind control is very difficult.

भजतो ब्रह्मचर्यं स्यान्मेरु : प्रत्यन्त पर्वत : ।
ब्रह्मचर्येण रिक्तस्य भवेत्पादस्सुराचल : ।।

For one who is steadfast in the practice of Brahmacharya, the Meru mountain appears

as a hillock, and for one who is incontinent even a small hill appears as the Meru mountain.

ब्रह्मचर्यं दृढं यस्य सागरो गोष्पदायते ।
ब्रह्मचर्यविहीनस्य गोष्पदं सागरायते ।।

For a strict adherent of Brahmacharya even an ocean appears as a puddle formed of cow-foot and a cow-foot puddle becomes an ocean for a non–Brahmachari.

ब्रह्मचर्य व्रतंसारं व्रतनामुत्तमम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यं तपस्सारं ब्रह्मचर्यं महत्फलम् ।।

Brahmacharya is the essence of all religious vows. It is the foremost of all the sacred observances. It is the essence of all penance and is the great fruit.

ब्रह्मचर्यस्य सुगुणं क्षुणु त्वंच सुधा धिया ।
आजन्मभरणाद्यस्तु ब्रह्मचारी भवेदिह ।।

I tell you the greatness of Brahmacharya. No misery of this world can afflict a man who practises Brahmacharya for life.

न तस्य किन्चिदप्राप्यमिति विद्धि नराधिप ।
बहुकोटि ऋषीणांच ब्रह्मलोके वसन्त्युत ।।

Nothing is unattainable by a man of continence. Owing to the power of Brahmacharya crores of sages have attained Brahmaloka.

रेतो नावकिरेज्जातु ब्रह्मव्रतधरः स्वयम् ।
अवकीर्णेऽवगाह्यप्सु यतासुस्त्रिपदी जपेत् ॥

A student who has taken the vow of a Brahmacharin should never consciously allow the ejaculation of his semen to take place. If it should take place naturally by itself, he should bathe, perform Pranayama, and utter the Gayatri Mantra.

- Srimad Bhagavata

स्त्रीणां निरीक्षणस्पर्शसंलापक्ष्वेलनादिकम् ।
प्राणिनो मिथुनीभूतानगृहस्थोऽग्रतस्त्यजेत् ॥

Excepting the householder, others should not indulge in sexually motivated behaviour towards women, like viewing, touching, holding homely conversations, joking, etc. They should avoid also the sight of animals and birds copulating.

- Srimad Bhagavata

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ।।

That fool, who (outwardly) controlling the organs of action keeps dwelling on sense-objects with the mind, is called a hypocrite.

- Bhagavad Gita

शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक्शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।
कामक्रोधोद्भवं वेगं स युक्तः स कुखी नरः ।।

He who is able to withstand the urge arising from lust and anger in this very life, before the fall of the body, is poised and a happy man.

- Bhagavad Gita

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।
कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेतू ।।

There are three types of gates to hell destructive of the self – lust, anger and greed; therefore these three should be shunned.

- Bhagavad Gita

THE POWER OF LUST

The roots of lust are indeed deep. Even Sri Krishna has hinted at it in answer to a pertinent question by Arjuna. He not describes the power of lust but in a significant in-depth analysis, points out three seats of lust:

Arjuna asks: Prompted by what does a man commit sin, even though unwilling, being goaded, as it were, by force?

The Blessed Lord says: This is lust, this is anger, born of the constituents of rajas, of inordinate appetite and is most sinful. Know it to be an enemy here. O son of Kunti, knowledge is covered by this enemy of the wise in the form of lust which is like an insatiable fire. The senses, the mind, and the intellect are said to be its seats; covering knowledge by these, it deludes the embodied being. Thus knowing that which is beyond the intellect (self) and controlling the mind by the intellect (self), kill, O mighty armed one (Arjuna), the enemy in the form of lust, which is difficult to conquer."

PART FIVE

WHAT IS VEDANTA

One is aware of pleasure and pain,birth and death, disease and grief, as long as one is identified with the body. All these belong to the body alone and not to the Soul. After the death of the body, perhaps God carries one to a better place. It is like the birth of the child after the pain of delivery. Attaining Self-knowledge one looks on pleasure and pain, birth and death, as a dream.

–Sri Ramakrishna

Teach yourselves, teach everyone, his real na ture, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.

– Swami Vivekananda

PART FIVE

WHAT IS VEDANTA

"My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life."

-Swami Vivekananda

Vedanta is not a religion meant for only a particular sect of people. Vedanta is a way of life. The literal meaning of Vedanta is the end portion of the Vedas or the essence of the Vedas which contains the universal truths discovered by enlightened people. Since these truths were revealed to them in deep meditation, we call them seers, *Mantra Drashta* or sages. They were great scientists and their laboratory was the human body. They had only one equipment to discover these wonderful truths and that was the human mind. The process of experiment was simple. That is, turning this restless mind within. By nature, the mind is an extrovert and also tries to go out through different windows to enjoy the beauty of nature. These

windows are our senses always running after the beautiful objects of enjoyment offered by nature. Today's scientific discoveries and inventions are the products of this search after truth in the outer world. Sages also were great scientists, spiritual scientists who closed the windows and controlled their minds from going out and systematically turned them within. The result was the wonderful discovery in the inner world or spiritual world. They discovered universal truths pertaining to God, universe, man, Atman, creation, divinity, consciousness and could achieve freedom from all bondages, i.e birth, death, old age and suffering. They became immortal.

ESSENTIALS OF VEDANTA

1) Real Nature of Human Beings:

Away from the hustle and bustle of society, desirous of realising something profound, something eternal and everlasting these seekers after truth went deep into the forests and caves, avoiding all kinds of distractions. They tried their utmost to calm down this restless and scattered mind in the depths of silence, entered into the deeper and deeper

layers of their subconsious mind, and ultimately transcending this limited body and mind could perceive the truth face to face. After realising truth about their own self, they declared in one voice that divine self or the Atman or spiritual consciousness is the real nature of man. The body, the mind, the intellect, etc. are but the external coverings which hide the real self. They could clearly perceive body and soul as two separate entities and the immortal soul hidden within this mortal body. They also declared that since the same Atman dwells in the heart of everyone all are entitled to realise this truth irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sects and genders. Even women like Gargi,Maitreyi, Madalasa, got enlightenment. So, they declared that man or woman is not just a bundle of flesh, bones, blood, and marrow, but essentially he or she is divine and it is his/her birthright to discover this truth. Identification with this mortal body is the only cause of bondage.

2) Nature of the Self:

From time immemorial man is in search of infinite knowledge, infinite bliss, infinite

peace and eternal life. Though these things are present within himself all the time, out of ignorance he is searching for them in the outer world. In spite of all modern amenities and comforts, wealth and power, name and fame he feels emptiness and vacuum in his heart. His condition is like that of the musk deer—though the Kasturi is always present in its navel, out of ignorance the deer runs hither and thither in search of fragrance. Vedanta declares that what we are searching for is within us. If we search in the right place, we will get lasting peace, infinite bliss and eternal life. The nature of the soul is Sacchidananda—existence-knowledge-bliss absolute. Vedanta says that the soul is eternally pure, eternally free and ever-existing reality behind all these apparent manifestations. It is of the nature of pure knowledge and self-effulgence. It is the intelligent and conscious spirit, the eternal witness. It is the consciousness of all conscious beings, because of It's power the body and the senses are performing their respective functions. It is the eye of the eye, ear of the ear, mind of the mind and life of life, hidden within this body but not bound

by the limitations of the body. The body is a product of matter and will go back to matter, but the soul within is immortal. There is no freedom unless we realise that Immortal Being hidden within this mortal body.

3) Freedom –the Goal of Life:

According to *Sanatana Dharma*, the supreme goal of life is freedom (*moksha*). In ancient times, in order to achieve this goal, society was divided into four Ashramas, i.e. Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. This ideal of freedom was taught to students from the very first Ashrama and they used to practise Gayatri, Sandhya and Upanayanam in order to purify their minds to achieve that goal. Students were taught in Gurukula Ashramas both spiritual and secular knowledge. After fulfilling their responsibilities as householders, people used to retire into the forest to prepare themselves for the ultimate goal, completely renouncing worldly attachment. But today, people are not even aware that they are caught in such bondage. Only through Self-knowledge one attains to freedom, which is the purpose of human life. The religion which help us to

achieve that freedom is true religion. Here are the words of Swami Vivekananda on true religion:

"Each soul is potentially divine, the goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work , or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals, or books or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."

4) Cause of Bondage:

Vedanta says that the mind is the cause of bondage when it is impure and attached to the sense objects; the same mind can lead us to freedom when it is free from the attachment to worldly things. What makes our mind impure or pure? Our thoughts, actions and words. Good character leads to freedom, bad character leads to bondage. How to develop good character? In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions; and they will influence his thought and work without his

being conscious of the fact. He will be like a machine in the hands of his impressions, and they will force him to do evil, and that man will be a bad man; he cannot help it. Similarly, if a man thinks good thoughts and does good works, the sum total of these impressions will be good, and they, in a similar manner, will force him to do good, even in spite of himself. When such is the case, man's character is said to be established."

No one can escape from the law of Karma. As the popular Hindi proverb goes, 'Jaishi Karni Vaisi Bharni'. 'As you sow, so you reap' Self- accountability is the cardinal principle of *Sanatana Dharma*. We are personally held responsible for our good or bad actions. We may be able to escape from the civil law and punishment but no one can escape from the law of Karma. One has to suffer for one's bad deeds, no one can share the burden of the bearer. But by changing our attitude, behaviour and habits, we can certainly undo what we had done. There is a popular dictum, 'sow a thought and reap an action, sow an action and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a character, sow a character and reap a destiny, you are the maker of your own destiny.'

5. Unity in Diversity:

Vedanta declares oneness of existence. The differences we see in this world are apparent and behind this apparent diversity there is an underlying unity which Vedanta calls Atman or Brahman. It is like one real sun being reflected in different pots filled with water. Though we give different names to the ornaments, the essence is only gold. Truth is one, God is one, sages call It by different names. Vedanta says that the entire universe is pervaded by that supreme divine consciousness, and that oneness can be experienced in the state of Samadhi or trance by transcending this limited mind through spiritual discipline. To realise that truth, they have suggested four yogas, and by practising these yogas one attains the Truth in this very life.

6) Practice of Vedanta:

There are four yogas. They are: Bhakti yoga (path of devotion), Karma Yoga (Path of Action), Raja Yoga (Path of Meditation) and Jnana Yoga (Path of Discrimination).

The uniqueness of the human body is that it has all the faculties necessary to practise

these four yogas simultaneously; that is, heart to love, intellect to discriminate, mind to contemplate and energy to work. The greatness of Swami Vivekananda is that he has perfectly harmonised these four yogas in his personality and also preached the same ideal for the modern age. He expressed this ideal in the emblem of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission which he himself designed.

'The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma, the lotus of Bhakti, and the rising sun of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the picture stands for the Paramatman. Therefore, the idea of the picture is that by the union of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga, the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.'

Bhakti Yoga

God has kept the emotion of love in the human heart in order to reach Him. When it is

controlled, purified and directed towards God, it leads to freedom. Worldly love when directed towards and offered to God becomes devotion. By offering this love to God many have realised Him. Purandara Dasa, Tyagaraja, Annamayyacharya, Kabir Das, Tulasi Das, Sura Das, Meera Bai, Tukaram, and others, were blessed with divine vision through the practice of Bhakti yoga. Love offered to God grows day by day, expanding our heart till it reaches His holy feet. But when it is given to the world it only invites suffering and miseries. Whatever we love of this world is not going to remain permanently. And the separation from the object that we love is going to invite only suffering. God is eternal and therefore love offered to Him brings only happiness and peace. Let us cultivate devotion for the lotus feet of God by practising Japa, meditation, singing His glories, bhajans, and by reading His wonderful divine sport. By constantly thinking of Him, reading about Him and by following His teachings we can cultivate devotion to Him.

Karma Yoga:

There is tremendous energy or urge in human beings to do something or the other. It

is impossible to keep quiet even for a moment. Since we cannot remain without work, it is better to learn the secret of work in order to achieve higher things in life. Ordinary selfish work is the cause of bondage, but the same work when done with the right attitude and approach leads us to freedom, breaking all bondages, which we call Karma yoga.

There are two ways to perform our duties in this world.

This world is like a huge stage on which we are all playing different roles. God has created this world and therefore He is the director of this entire show. It is He who is getting His work done through us, and we are just instruments in His hands. Therefore whatever work He has assign to us, we should do it as worship. We should never think that we are working for money, or power or for our boss—our ultimate boss is only God. If we do our work as worship, with concentration, devotion, dedication, sincerity and perfection, it becomes Karma Yoga. Swami Vivekananda said, 'Devotion to duty is the highest form of worship of God.' O Lord, you are my master and I am your servant. That was the attitude of Mahavir towards Sri Rama.

The second approach is known as practical Vedanta or Vedantic approach, which is the special contribution of Swami Vivekananda to modern society. Vedanta says God is in everything. It is He who has manifested Himself in the form of different beings and therefore our worship should not be confined only to the temples and images but we must learn to feel the presence of the Divine in everyone and offer our worship in the form of devoted service to them. *'Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva.* This is the philosophy behind all activities conducted by the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Here are a few passages from Vivekananda's works: "You must give your body, mind, and speech to 'the welfare of the world'. You have read 'Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava: Look upon your mother as God, look upon your father as God', but I say, 'Daridra Devo Bhava, Murkha Devo Bhava—the poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God." Know that service to these alone is the highest religion."

"After so much of austerity, I have understood this as the real truth – God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that. 'Who serves Jiva, serves God indeed."

"This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary."

This approach of seeing God in everyone will bring tremendous transformation in our outlook. The moment we are convinced about this truth, we cannot but love all. Love, compassion, dedication, spirit of service these qualities will spontaneously manifest in our character and all negative emotions such as hatred, anger, jealousy will disappear from our mind. Such a pure mind will progress in the path of spiritual enlightenment.

Raja Yoga:

By nature, the mind is restless. A great yogi, Patanjali, studied this human mind in depth and discovered wonderful techniques and scientific methods to control it. His *Yoga Darshana* (or *Yoga Sutras*) is the most authentic text on Yoga philosophy. His Astanga yoga is universally accepted and practised by almost all spiritual aspirants throughout the world. By practising his methods, anyone, irrespective of caste, colour, sex. religion and creed, can realise

the universal and eternal truths hidden within the human body. It is a most scientific and systematic approach to the attainment of Self-knowledge. According to him, yoga is nothing but the cessation of mental modifications. By constant practice of meditation, a restless mind can be brought under control. Meditation helps in many ways. It helps students to develop the power of concentration. It helps to erase the negative emotions from the mind, making the mind strong and steady. The process of sublimation protects us from various mental and psychological disorders, such as depression, tension, worry, stress, anxiety, fear, etc. Development of strong will, creativity, originality, talents, purity, tranquillity, clarity of thinking and ultimately realisation of our real nature—these are the tangible results of constant practice of meditation.

Jnana Yoga:

Though God has given intellectual faculty to human beings, it is rarely made use of. To practise Jnana Yoga, one needs a very sharp and subtle intellect. This path is known as the path of discrimination. When Siddhartha, a young prince came out of the palace he was shocked to see an old man, a sick man and a dead body.

When he was told that everyone has to pass through these processes of old age, decay, disease and death, his intellect was awakened. He left everything in search of truth and ultimately experienced a state of Nirvana (Self-knowledge), and became free from all bodily bondages. Great sages like Vishwamitra, Vashistha, Yajnavalkya and Janaka practised this path of knowledge to realise the truth. According to this path, first one should hear about these truths from scriptures and then by constant practice of discrimination one must separate the soul from the body. Ramana Maharishi practised this yoga by constantly questioning himself: "Who am I ?" I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the senses I am not the chitta, I am not the intellect but I am the Self within this body. I am the Self, I am Atman, I am Brahman. By constantly asserting our real nature, we can easily overcome our attachment to this mortal body and realise our eternal, immortal, divine nature.

All these four yogas can be practised simultaneously since all these faculties are present in a human being. Swami Vivekananda's books on Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga are classic presentations on the subject for those who are interested in gaining more knowledge about the subject.

CONCLUSION

The human body is a combination of matter and spirit. Spirit is always superior to matter. Matter drags us down whereas spirit lifts us up. That education which does not provide equal opportunities to develop both matter and spirit is no education at all. In ancient times, under the guidance of a Guru students used to learn both the secular and the spiritual aspects of the human personality. Vedic samskara system like Gayatri, Upanayana, Sandhya, Vedapathana, etc. used to help them to assimilate lofty ideas. By leading a self-disciplined life they could develop wonderful character. Today, unfortunately, only the matter is being attended to and the spirit is completely neglected. The result is all-round decline of human values. Let us work together to inculcate those long cherished values among our children and youth to make India a glorious country — a place where people will live together in peace and happiness.

❁ ❁ ❁

This infinite power of the spirit, brought to bear upon matter evolves

material development, made to act upon thought evolves intellect-uality, and made to act upon itself makes of man a God.

- Swami Vivekananda

PHILOSOPTIY OF VEDANTA

– Swami Vivekananda

What is the utility, the effect, the result, of this Self-knowledge? In these days, we have to measure everything by utility—by how many pounds, shillings, and pence it represents. What right has a person to ask that truth should be judged by the standard of utility or money? Suppose there is no utility, will it be less true? Utility is not the test of truth. Nevertheless, there is the highest utility in this. Happiness, we see, is what everyone is seeking, but the majority seek it in things which are evanescent and not real. No happiness was ever found in the senses. There never was a person who found happiness in the senses or in enjoyment of the senses. Happiness is only found in the Spirit. Therefore the highest utility for mankind is to find this happiness in the Spirit. The next point is that ignorance is the great mother of all misery, and

the fundamental ignorance is to think that the Infinite weeps and cries, that He is finite. This is the basis of all ignorance that we, the immortal, the ever pure, the perfect Spirit, think that we are little minds, that we are little bodies; it is the mother of all selfishness. As soon as I think that I am a little body, I want to preserve it, to protect it, to keep it nice, at the expense of other bodies; then you and I become separate. As soon as this idea of separation comes, it opens the door to all mischief and leads to all misery. This is the utility that if a very small fractional part of human beings living today can put aside the idea of selfishness, narrowness, and littleness, this earth will become a paradise tomorrow; but with machines and improvements of material knowledge only, it will never be. These only increase misery, as oil poured on fire increases the flame all the more. Without the knowledge of the Spirit, the material knowledge is only adding fuel to the fire, only giving into the hands of selfish man one more instrument to take what belongs to others, to live upon the life of others, instead of giving up his life for them.

Is it practical?—is another question. Can it be practised in the modern society? Truth does

not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die. Societies should be moulded upon truth, and truth has not to adjust itself to society. If such a noble truth as unselfishness cannot be practised in society, it is better for man to give up society and go into the forest. That is the daring man. An Emperor who invaded India was told by his teacher to go and see some of the sages there. After a long search for one, he found a very old man sitting on a block of stone. The Emperor talked with him a little and became very much impressed by his wisdom. He asked the sage to go to his country with him. "No", said the sage, "I am quite satisfied with my forest here." Said the Emperor, "I will give you money, position, wealth. I am Emperor of the world." "No." replied the man, "I don't care for those things." The Emperor replied, "If you do not go, I will kill you." The man smiled serenely and said. "That is the most foolish thing you ever said, Emperor. You cannot kill me. Me the sun cannot dry, the fire cannot burn,the sword cannot kill, for I am the birthless, the deathless, the ever-living omnipotent, omnipresent Spirit." This is spiritual boldness.

That society is the greatest, where the highest truth becomes practical. That is my opinion; and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so; and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth! The world requires a few hundred bold men and women. Practise that boldness which dares know the Truth, which dares show the Truth in life, which does not quake before death, nay, welcomes death, makes a man know that he is the Spirit, that, in the whole universe, nothing can kill him. Then you will be free. Then you will know your real Soul. "This Atman is first to be heard, then thought about and then meditated upon."

There is a great tendency in modern times to talk too much of work and decry thought. Doing is very good, but that comes from thinking. Little manifestations of energy through the muscles are called work. But where there is no thought, there will be no work. Fill the brain, therefore, with high thoughts, highest ideals, place them day and night before you, and out of that will come great work. Talk not about impurity, but say that we are pure. We

have hypnotised ourselves into this thought that we are little, that we are born, and that we are going to die, and into a constant state of fear.

There is a story about a lioness, who was big with its young, going about in search of prey; and seeing a flock of sheep, she jumped upon them. She died in the effort; and the little baby lion was born, motherless. It was taken care of by the sheep, and the sheep brought it up, and it grew up with them, ate grass, and bleated like the sheep. And although in time it became a big, full-grown lion, it thought it was a sheep. One day another lion came in search of prey and was astonished to find that in the midst of the flock of sheep was a lion, feeling like the sheep at the approach of danger. He tried to get near the sheep lion, to tell it that it was not a sheep but a lion; but the poor animal fled at his approach. However, he watched his opportunity and one day found the sheep-lion sleeping. He approached it and said, "You are a lion." " I am a sheep," cried the other lion and could not believe the contrary but bleated. The lion dragged him towards a lake and said, "Look here, here is my reflection and yours." Then came the comparison. It looked at the lion and then at its own reflection, and in a moment came

the idea that it was a lion. The lion roared, the bleating was gone. You are lions, you are souls, pure, infinite, and perfect. The might of the universe is within you. " Why weepest thou, my friend? There is neither birth nor death for thee. Why weepest thou? There is no disease nor misery for thee, but thou art like the infinite sky; clouds of various colours come over it, play for a moment, then vanish. But the sky is ever the same eternal blue."

Why do we see wickedness? There was a stump of a tree, and in the dark, a thief came that way and said, " That is a policeman." A young man waiting for his beloved saw it and thought that it was his sweetheart. A child who had been told ghost stories took it for a ghost and began to shriek. But all the time it was the stump of a tree. We see the world as we are. Suppose there is a baby in a room with a bag of gold on the table and a thief comes and steals the gold. Would the baby know it was stolen? That which we have inside, we see outside. So with all knowledge. Do not talk of the wickedness of the world and all its sins. Weep that you are bound to see sin everywhere, and if you want to help the world, do not condemn it. Do not weaken it more. For what is sin and

what is misery, and what are all these, but the results of weakness? The world is made weaker and weaker every day by such teachings. Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into their brains from very childhood. Lay yourselves open to these thoughts, and not to weakening and paralysing ones. Say to your own minds, " I am He, I am He." Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare, " I am He." That is the truth; the infinite strength of the world is yours. Drive out the superstition that has covered your minds. Let us be brave. Know the Truth and practise the Truth. The goal may be distant, but awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached!

❁ ❁ ❁

Any action that makes us go Godward is a good action, and is our duty; any action that makes us go downward is evil, and is not our duty.

- Swami Vivekananda

VEDANTA IN PRACTICE

- Swami Vivekananda

People have become so degraded in this Kali Yuga that they think they can do anything, and then they can go to a holy place, and their sins will be forgiven. If a man goes with an impure mind into a temple, he adds to the sins that he had already, and goes home a worse man than when he left it. Thirtha (place of pilgrimage) is a place which is full of holy things and holy men. But if holy people live in a certain place, and if there is no temple there, even that is a Tirtha. If unholy people live in a place where there may be a hundred temples, the Tirtha has vanished from that place. And it is most difficult to live in a Tirtha; for if sin is committed in any ordinary place it can easily be removed, but sin committed in a Tirtha cannot be removed. This is the gist of all worship – to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one

poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything., with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.

A rich man had a garden and two gardeners. One of these gardeners was very lazy and did not work; but when the owner came to the garden, the lazy man would get up and fold his arms and say, "How beautiful is the face of my master", and dance before him. The other gardener would not talk much, but would work hard, and produce all sorts of fruits and vegetables which he would carry on his head to the master who lived a long way off. Of these two gardeners, which would be the more beloved of his master? Shiva is that master, and this world is His garden, and there are two sorts of gardeners here; the one who is lazy, hypocritical, and does nothing, only talking about Shiva's beautiful eyes and nose and other features; and the other, who is taking care of Shiva's children, all those that are poor and weak, all animals, and all His creation. Which of these would be the more beloved of Shiva? Certainly he that serves His children. He who wants to serve the father must serve the children first.

He who wants to serve Shiva must serve His children–must serve all creatures in this world first. It is said in the Shastra that those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants. So you will bear this in mind.

Let me tell you again that you must be pure and help anyone who comes to you, as much as lies in your power. And this is good Karma. By the power of this, the heart becomes pure (Chitta-shuddhi), and then Shiva who is residing in everyone will become manifest. He is always in the heart of everyone. If there is dirt and dust on a mirror, we cannot see our image. So ignorance and wickedness are the dirt and dust that are on the mirror of our hearts. Selfishness is the chief sin, thinking of ourselves first. He who thinks, "I will eat first, I will have more money than others, and I will possess everything", he who thinks, "I will get to heaven before others, I will get Mukti before others" is the selfish man. The unselfish man says, "I will be last, I do not care to go to heaven, I will even go to hell if by doing so I can help my brothers." This unselfishness is the test of religion. He who has more of this unselfishness is more spiritual and nearer to Shiva. Whether he is learned or

ignorant, he is nearer to Shiva than anybody else, whether he knows it or not. And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off from Shiva.

❁ ❁ ❁

Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life, and hatred is death.

- Swami Vivekananda

RENUNCIATION AND SERVICE

There is no time to deliver a long discourse on "Renunciation", but I shall very briefly characterize it as "the love of death". Are we to commit suicide then? Far from it. For suicides are not lovers of death, as it is often seen that when a man trying to commit suicide fails, he never attempts it for a second time. What is the love of death then? We must die, that is certain; let us die then for a good cause. Let all our actions - eating, drinking, and everything that we do - tend towards the sacrifice of our self. You nourish your body by eating. What good is there in doing that if

you do not hold it as sacrifice to the well-being of others? You nourish your minds by reading books. There is no good in doing that unless you hold it also as a sacrifice to the whole world. For the whole world is one; you are rated a very insignificant part of it, and therefore it is right for you that you should serve your millions of brothers rather that aggrandize this little self. To go ahead of others in salvation is wrong. One must learn sooner or later that one cannot get salvation if one does not try to seek the salvation of his brothers. You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate fields. You must be prepared to explain the difficult intricacies of the Shastras now, and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market. You must be prepared for all menial services, not only here, but elsewhere also.

– Swami Vivekananda

THOUGHT POWER

Each thought is a little hammer blow on the lump of iron which our bodies are manufacturing out of it what we want it to be.

We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care of what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live, they travel far. Each thought we think is tinged with our own character, so that for the pure and holy man, even his jests or abuse will have the twist of his own love and purity and do good.

Every vicious thought will rebound, every thought of hatred which you may have thought, in a cave even, is stored up, and will one day come back to you with tremendous power in the form of some misery here. If you project hatred and jealousy, they will rebound on you with compound interest. No power can avert them; when once you have put them in motion, you will have to bear them. Remembering this will prevent you from doing wicked things.

- Swami Vivekananda